

MOLIÈRE

The name assumed by Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who was born in Paris in 1622. Studied law at University of Orléans. Attracted to theatre, formed a small troupe and toured the provinces acting plays written by himself, 1645-58. Died in 1673.

Moliere's Comedies

IN TWO VOLUMES · VOLUME ONE

INTRODUCTION BY

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INTRODUCTION

IN the seventeenth century, the habitual drowsiness of certain provincial towns like Montpellier, Pézenas, or Carcassonne, was apt to be pleasantly disturbed by two important events: the sessions of the *États provinciaux* and the incursion of troupes of strolling actors hired to divert His Majesty's grave and worthy officers. In the forties and fifties of the Grand Century some fifteen such travelling theatres roved up and down France, but the only one which interests us is the *Illustre Théâtre*, directed by Jean-Baptiste Poquelin de Molière. History, that tantalising jade, is more than usually secretive about the origins and fortunes of this actor-dramatist and his company. Born in Paris in 1622 of sound *bourgeois* stock, young Poquelin was educated at the Collège de Clermont by the Jesuits, the most liberal and humane teachers of that time. Tradition has it that he also attended the private lectures of an admirable layman, Gassendi, who was busily engaged in reviving Epicureanism as a reaction against the philosophic teachings of Aristotle and Descartes. However, according to G. Michaut, this persistent and widespread legend will not bear critical examination.

In 1643, Molière relinquished all claim to the honour of succeeding his father as *valet de chambre, tapissier du roi*, and with ten other enthusiasts founded the *Illustre Théâtre*. Of these, three belonged to an old acting family called Béjart, and it is certain that while love of the theatre was the chief reason for Molière's odd behaviour, the *beaux yeux* of the Titian-haired Madeleine Béjart counted also for not a little. Whatever the deciding factor it was a powerful one, for in the seventeenth century the stage was literally the ante-chamber to hell. An actor was automatically excommunicated by the Church by virtue of his calling: he could not approach the sacraments save after petition, and as a special favour: on his death his body might not be buried in consecrated ground. All this of course was known to Molière, but apparently he considered the theatre well worth a mass and the paternal malediction.

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As was then the custom, the troupe played in a disused tennis-court on the site of what is now No. 12 Rue Mazarine. In the following year they moved to another *jeu de paume*, which was destroyed in the eighteenth century to make way for the house now known as No. 32 Quai des Célestins. Affairs went badly, and Molière was imprisoned for debt in 1644; his father, however, assisted him. The Duke of Orléans, the patron of the company, left for the war, and the *Illustre Théâtre* took the road for the provinces. Despite uncanny detective work on the part of savants we know very little of what happened to Molière's troupe during the next thirteen years. Traces of its passage have been found in contracts, baptismal certificates, and other records discovered in provincial archives. Its repertory apparently consisted largely of bombastic tragedies, but Molière himself adapted farces and comedies from the Italian, and these improvisations, of which *Le Médecin volant* and *La Jalouse du Barbuillé* are typical examples, he later rewrote for the capital. The actors wandered from town to town, mostly in the southern provinces, playing at fairs, the weddings of country gentlemen, or at the meetings of the *États*. On one of these latter occasions, at the opening of the sessions at Pézenas in 1655 Molière had the good fortune to fall in with an old schoolfellow, no less a personage than the Prince de Conti, who used his influence on behalf of the *Illustre Théâtre*. But happy interludes of this sort were rare. To realise what was then the life of the travelling mummer we must turn over the pages of Scarron's novel, *Le Roman Comique*, which was published in 1651. Here you may watch the progress of just such a company as Molière's, trudging along the dusty roads, followed by shrieking children and the hostile glances of bovine peasants, accosted and questioned by officious *prévôts*, swindled by rascally innkeepers, their women leered at by insolent squires, yet all joyous, hard-working and loyal to their leader and their art.

In October 1658, Molière, after some preliminary negotiations, took service in the capital under the protection of the king's brother. The members of the *Illustre Théâtre* now became *Les Comédiens de Monsieur*, with the privilege of playing in the old Guard Room of the Louvre. Their intelligent acting and the dignified presence of their leader made a favourable impression on Louis XIV, who granted them permission to share the theatre of the Petit Bourbon with the permanent Italian company. Here their maiden

efforts were not successful, perhaps because their repertory consisted largely of the tragedies of Corneille, who was passing out of vogue. The performance of the *Précieuses ridicules*, however, in 1659 set all Paris talking. It was followed in 1660 by *Sganarelle*, which fell flat because everyone had left for the country, and because the court had moved south for the king's marriage. On the latter's return, however, Molière scored a brilliant success with the *École des Maris*. He was now, at thirty-nine, on the threshold of his career as a great and original dramatist. At forty he married Armande Béjart, whose exact relationship to Molière's mistress, Madeleine, is one of the enigmas of literature. His contemporaries believed that she was a daughter of Madeleine's, born before she met the dramatist, whilst her birth certificate seems to indicate that she was Madeleine's youngest sister. Literary success created enemies and marriage brought much sadness, for Armande was unfaithful. The *École des Femmes*, produced in 1662, stirred up envy amongst the rival actors of the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, and in society the prudes, the *dévotes* and fashionable wits found it coarse, irreligious and irregular. Molière wheeled round to the attack in his *Impromptu de Versailles*, which disposed of his professional rivals, whilst in the *Critique de l'École des Femmes* he discreetly but effectively silenced the court.

The king continued to protect him, and kept the actor-author busy with comedies and ballets which were acted at Versailles, St. Germain-en-Laye and at the Tuilleries. On 12 May, 1664, Molière submitted three acts of *Le Tartuffe* to Louis, who was delighted with the performance, but judged it wise to keep the play from the public which might not have the wit to see that it was a satire not against religion, but against religious hypocrisy. Various private performances were given, and the author was sharply attacked by the Church and by the very *Tartuffes* whom he held up to ridicule. He petitioned the king to remove the ban, but without result, and meanwhile the theatre passed through difficult times. The year 1665 was a black one. *Le Tartuffe* was still forbidden. Racine joined the enemy ranks though Boileau and Lafontaine remained loyal. His marriage was now known to be a complete failure, and he separated from Armande. A long illness added to his miseries, and he realised that his health was undermined. At the theatre, too, things were in a bad way. *Le Misanthrope*, produced in 1666, was a comparative failure.

In desperation, acting, as he claimed, on verbal authority given by the king, Molière played *Le Tartuffe*, though under a new name, and somewhat toned down in places. Its success was phenomenal, but immediately the cabal of Church and *Parlement* reared its head and the play was officially suppressed. Undaunted, Molière sent two of his faithful henchmen to appeal to Cæsar, but Cæsar was at the front, and had more important business than settling actors' squabbles, though he did promise to look into the matter on his return. The theatre was closed for a time, but reopened with *Amphitryon* in 1668. The receipts went up only to drop again, despite the *Avare*, till fortunately the ban was at last lifted and *Le Tartuffe* publicly acted early in 1669 to packed houses.

The storm had been weathered. There was a reconciliation with Armande, but Molière was a dying man, though he did not realise it. No flickering of the flame of his genius was yet discernible. He had now no rivals, and produced practically only his own plays for the public wanted no others. By a strange irony his last work was *Le Malade imaginaire*, at one of the performances of which, on 17 February, 1673, he was seized with a fit. Heroically he struggled through his part till the curtain fell, when he was carried to his house, where he died. The local priest refused burial, but after petition consent was given on condition that there should be no service and no publicity. And so, at nine o'clock at night, by the gracious clemency of that notorious libertine Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, the frail shell where once was housed the purest comic spirit which has yet been given to the world, was secretly hurried to its last resting-place.

(For Molière the art of comedy is not merely to excite laughter by a comic yet probable presentation of some aspect of life: it is to excite the laughter which is a prelude to reflection. Is not this precisely what he means when in the *Critique* he says: "C'est une étrange entreprise que celle de faire rire *les honnêtes gens*." It is comparatively easy to attain those broad farcical effects which fill the groundlings with hilarity. But true comedy is a difficult business, harder even than tragedy, because, in art as in life, laughter is so perilously akin to tears. And in this higher sort of comedy, *la haute comédie*, it is not enough to present, as in the comedy of manners, mere *vraisemblance*—a superficial illusion of reality. The author must seize and fix the universal and eternal truth which lies at the roots of human conduct. This Molière achieved. He does

more than reflect life: he interprets its hidden significance. It is just because he extracted this rare essence from his own soul and from his experience of the world about him, that his great comedies are immortal. And this peculiar genius of his can be detected not only in the structure of his great types, his Harpagons, Tartuffes, and Alceste, but also in the littlest of his creations.) Take, for example, the tailor in the *Bourgeois gentilhomme*, in that scene where M. Jourdain complains that his new shoes are hurting him. There are a hundred funny answers which that tailor might have made, but his ineffable and dogmatic "*Point du tout. Ils ne vous blessent point*" is unique. It is the only retort which is as comic to-day as it was two hundred years ago.

This unerring flair for the essential, significant trait is unparalleled in pure comedy. Other writers achieve it sometimes, Molière almost always. And once having isolated it he makes it the *motif* of his character symphony. What, for instance, is the fundamental trait of the miser? Brunetière suggested "suspicion," but a jealous lover is more suspicious than a miser. Is it not the fear of being robbed, a mania so common to all misers that no miser is worthy of the name who entrusts his money to a bank? The restless suspicion of Harpagon is the result of this obsession which is so great that he cannot sleep. And the hypocrite? The dominating trait of Tartuffe is not his false devoutness: it is his continual false self-abasement. Dickens realised that when he fastened to Uriah Heep the label, "I'm so 'umble." If religious hypocrisy were Tartuffe's fundamental trait, he would not interest the twentieth century. Again, what is the essence of *Étourderie*? It is not merely "putting one's foot in it," but the exasperating and smug self-satisfaction of the *Étourdi*. (In the *Misanthrope* the hero's chief characteristic is not hatred of mankind, but the mania for sincerity everywhere and always. Really, the play is wrongly named, and had Molière lived in the nineteenth century he would have doubtless called it *Le Romantique*, for Alceste's unhappiness arises from a consciousness of being out of tune with a universe which refuses to adapt itself to his ego.)

In Molière character creation is all-important, transcending situation and plot construction. So, before hastily condemning his undoubted shortcomings in the latter respect, and particularly in the matter of *dénouements*, we would do well to bear this fact in mind. In a comedy where the main

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interest is focused on character it is the psychological and not the physical action which matters. Naturally, in a perfect play, the two actions rise simultaneously to a common peripetia and coalesce in a common *dénouement*.) In *Le Tartuffe* it seems at first glance that precisely the contrary takes place. Is the psychological action not ended by the unmasking of Tartuffe at the close of the fourth act? This would be so if the problem were: "Will the infatuated Orgon realise the true character of Tartuffe?" But the problem is much larger. It is: "Can Tartuffe's ascendancy over the Orgon *ménage* be destroyed?" And by exposing his question in these terms Molière is able to throw further light on the main figure, for the fifth act reveals the hypocrite unmasked, but still holding the whip-lash. It is true that the *dénouement* is weak, but it is not as Lanson cruelly says, "un miracle." The arrest of Tartuffe is not in itself a surprise to an audience which has realised from the outset that this man is a shady adventurer quite possibly known to the police. What is weak is the improbable explanation of the *exempt's* conduct in accompanying Tartuffe to Orgon's house, and in allowing him to gloat over his former dupe. The reason advanced—that the prince wanted to see how far Tartuffe would carry his villainy—seems to us preposterous. Yet it would not have appeared so in an age when respect for the monarch was a regular cult. An audience which believed that the royal touch cured sufferers from the king's evil, would scarcely strain at a gnat like the *dénouement* of *Le Tartuffe*. Lanson also severely criticises the ending of *Dom Juan*, another "miracle." Of course it is, and so is the *dénouement* of *Faust*, which no one would dream of condemning. Yet *Dom Juan* is obviously also a symbolical play, since the hero is more than a wicked *grand seigneur* and debauched atheist. He is the symbol of incredulity, just as the Statue of the Commander is the symbol of retribution. There has always been a tendency in France to see in Molière only the neo-classic, and to express a surprise which is really a form of adverse criticism at the "irregularity" of plays like *Dom Juan* and *Le Misanthrope*, which step outside the barrier erected by Boileau between the comic and tragic. Yet nowhere is Molière's originality so evident as when he boldly gives free rein to his genius for character creation as he does in these two plays and in *Le Tartuffe*.

Molière's great types do not change with the course of events. Situations do not affect them fundamentally, but

serve only further to illuminate their psychology. And after all, this is logical. A reformed Harpagon or Alceste would be unthinkable: for obsessions, manias, and vices are interesting to the artist just because they are monstrous and incurable. It is the foibles or small vices which yield to the influence of circumstances. Orgon's infatuation, for example, is hard to eradicate, but he can be cured of it though it requires an unusual situation to bring this about. Not so with the great psychological lesions like hypocrisy and avarice, which never heal, and it is significant of Molière's attitude towards human nature that he presents few characters who, like Orgon, undergo "a change of heart." He does not believe that experience teaches fools; he would say rather that the characteristic of folly is that it is blind to the precepts of experience.

Like Shakespeare, Balzac, and other great creative artists, Molière had the gift of being able temporarily to live inside the skins of his characters, but he is never hallucinated by his creations as Balzac was to the point of losing control over them. Sometimes in his plot construction, particularly in his early plays, his imagination runs riot, but never when he is handling situation or character. Here he is always natural even in his most exuberant moments. His vast practical knowledge of stage technique, his theatrical instinct, was invaluable to him in this respect, for it enabled him to extract the maximum of comic effect from very slender themes as in the *Dépit amoureux* and in the *Précieuses*. Molière's borrowings have provided occupation for an army of commentators, and indeed he makes no pretence at originality in his themes. "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve," he said lightly, and so he could, for the "heavenly alchemy," which transmuted that drab, borrowed metal, the divine genius which conceived that glorious array of blockheads, rogues, and monomaniacs is Molière's and Molière's alone.

A century before that inspired sophist Jean-Jacques Rousseau crossed the frontier to preach the gospel of individualism to unregenerate Gaul, Molière in his *École des Maris* crystallised his views on all egotists and "queer fellows" in the couplet:

Toujours au plus grand nombre on doit s'accommoder
Et jamais il ne faut se faire regarder.

For Molière is the supreme anti-Romantic and all his work is a defence of the social order against the inroads of

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individualism. He ruthlessly tears down the meretricious veil which fools, hypocrites, and Romantics would interpose between man and the reality of life. And thus, thanks to his artistic genius, the unmasking of a Tartuffe becomes fraught with deep social significance. There is more spiritual refreshment in this one play than in a dozen sermons by Bossuet, for Molière talks to the plain man in the language which he understands, the language of calm common sense. He allays moral panic, and dismisses the spectres conjured up by a too romantic imagination. How well he realises the psychological influence exercised by a Tartuffe on his fellow-men, those mingled emotions of hatred, fear, and hopelessness which procure for a villain immunity in his sinister attacks upon society! As the great comedy unfolds, the mighty breeze of honest laughter arises, clearing the murky atmosphere of superstitious awe and romantic illusion, till the hypocrite stands revealed, not as a supernatural being, but as an unscrupulous scoundrel, extremely intelligent it is true, but betrayed into our hands by the courage and wit of a woman who discovers his weakness and plays upon it.

It is easy to misinterpret Molière's attitude towards the individual and his rights. Freedom for him is not the right to sacrifice society to one's *amour de soi*. Nor is it necessary, as Alceste says, to "betray one's soul" in a blind subservience to the demands of the crowd. Freedom is for Molière a very sacred thing. Note that flare of indignation at Arnolphe's treatment of Agnes in the *École des Femmes*:

Et n'est-il pas un crime punissable
De gâter méchamment ce fonds d'âme admirable . . . ?

What infamy indeed, what stupidity and ignorance wilfully to cage a human spirit, to keep a young and eager mind in darkness! This loathing of repression in any form is the hidden fire which lends the warm glow of vitality to all Molière's work, and it is the secret of his universal appeal. It lends the charm of eternal modernity to his satire of the abuse of parental authority and the conjugal subjection of women. "Thwart nature and you complicate life," is the lesson which he never tired of trying to din into the skulls of the fools and egotists who throng his stage. And by Nature Molière does not mean that illusory state of perfect happiness which Rousseau imagined we had abdicated in order to live in society. Nature is an ordered and rhythmic assemblage

of good and evil forces, and in the society of his day Molière seemed to see an admirable reflection of this cosmic harmony. That is why he never criticises the social order, but only such disturbing elements as seek to upset it. This acceptance of life is doubtless exasperating to reformers, zealots, and idealists, who are liable to construe it wrongly as a fatalistic attitude. Wrongly, because all Molière's teaching insists on the freedom of the individual to carve out his own destiny so long as this self-expressionism does not become anti-social. The cry of the fatalist that he has been "poussé par sa destinée" enrages Molière. "What!" exclaims Argante in the *Fourberies de Scapin*, "Now all we have to do is commit every imaginable crime, deceit, theft or murder, and to say in excuse that we were impelled by our destiny."

There are critics who accuse Molière of lack of idealism. They say, too, that the morality which he teaches is that of experience, which is no morality at all. His doctrine of common sense exposes him to the charge of discouraging originality by holding the lash of ridicule over any attempt to depart from the track beaten out by the herd. In his preface to the *Précieuses*, Molière anticipated such criticism when he pointed out that the function of the comic author was to satirise not ideals, but the vicious distortion of ideals. What is more admirable on the one hand than thrift, piety, learning, the proper desire to preserve one's health or to acquire the esteem of one's fellow-citizens: on the other what more detestable than avarice, hypocrisy, pedantry, hypochondria, and snobbery? Molière's ideal was truth, and that is why *Le Tartuffe* is his most perfect creation, for the great enemy of humanity is not folly, but hypocrisy. A hypochondriac, a snob, a miser, a pedant are no doubt irritating and harmful, but their vices or follies are obvious to all and can be attacked and neutralised. But the hypocrite is a real menace because he uses the truth to destroy truth. Tartuffe, surprised by Damis in the act of making love to Elmire, wastes no time in idle explanations, but launches into the magnificent speech beginning:

Oui, mon frère, je suis un méchant, un coupable,
Un malheureux pécheur, tout plein d'iniquité . . .

which is a master-stroke of psychological observation. Again, in *Dom Juan* it is significant that the peripeteia is the point where the debauchee and atheist becomes a hypocrite. This, as Sganarelle says, is the "climax of his abominations," and

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from that moment Don Juan's soul is doomed. There is indeed scarcely one of Molière's important plays where hypocrisy, or its by-product, insincerity, does not come under the terrible barrage of satire. Quackery, flattery, prudery, snobbery, literary charlatanism are mercilessly dealt with, for no one, save perhaps Voltaire, better understood the sterilising effect of ridicule than Molière. Yet, unlike Voltaire, he never attacks fundamental institutions, for he is a pure artist, and not a doctrinaire. Though a *bourgeois* like Voltaire he had none of the latter's petty envy of the aristocracy. His large conception of human values allowed him to realise that it is more important to be an "honnête homme," like the *bourgeois* Cléante, than a "méchant homme," like the powerful nobleman, Don Juan. It was this sense of true nobility which enabled Molière to command the respect of Louis XIV, and to surmount the odium which then attached to his profession. His was the true tolerance of the Humanist, not the *tolérantisme* of the eighteenth century, which is a kind of sublimated apathy. (Molière observed life with uncanny acuity, but the spectacle of human imperfection did not appal him as it did the Romantics. Neither did it inspire in him the iconoclastic fury of the eighteenth century. His ideal world would, of course, be that of Alceste, a world where all human relations are governed by an absolute regard for sincerity. Yet he realised that a society without vice would be a society without virtue, and therefore without happiness, for is not happiness the result of contrast? So with a certain wistfulness he leaves the idealist, Alceste, to seek his Utopia on a desert island, and plunges back into the society of the unregenerates whom he loved, laughed at and pitied for their frailties.)

F. C. GREEN.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

This text of Molière's plays is taken from the first complete English translation of his works carried out in 1739 by the two playwrights, H. Baker and J. Miller.

It has been chosen as it is thought to have more of the spirit of the original than would be found in a more modern version. The translators' prefaces to each play have been retained as interesting examples of the eighteenth century attitude to Molière, and not because of any intrinsic merit they may have as criticism.

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THE BLUNDERER:
OR THE
COUNTER-PLOTS
(A COMEDY)

**THE BLUNDERER, or THE COUNTERPLOTS, a Comedy of Five Acts
in Verse, acted at Paris at the Theatre of the Little Bourbon,
December 3, 1658.**

The Blunderer was acted in the month of December, 1658. We were then only acquainted with performances full of intrigue; the art of exposing characters and manners in the comic scene was reserved for Moliere. Although he has only given us a sketch of it in the comedy of *The Blunderer*, yet this piece is not unworthy of its author. It is partly in the ancient manner, the plot being carried on by a servant; and partly in the Spanish taste, by the multiplicity of incidents which spring up one after another, without one necessarily arising from another. We find some but indifferent characters in it, scenes but ill connected, and expressions not very correct; there is no great verisimilitude in the character of Lelius, and the unravelling is not very happy. The number of the acts are determined to five only in compliance with common custom, which restrains pieces of the greatest length to this number; but these defects are covered by a variety and vivacity, which keeps the spectator employed, and hinders him from reflecting too much upon what might give him offence.

A C T O R S

PANDOLPH, *father to Lelius.*

ANSELM, *father to Hippolyta.*

TRUFALDIN, *an old man.*

CELIA, *slave to Trufaldin.*

HIPPOLYTA, *daughter to Anselm.*

LELIUS, *son to Pandolph.*

LEANDER, *a young gentleman of rank.*

ANDER, *supposed a gipsy.*

MASCARIL, *servant to Lelius.*

ERGASTUS, *friend to Mascaril.*

POSTMAN.

Two companies in masquerade.

SCENE: *In a public place at Messina.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Lelius. Mighty well, Leander, extremely well, it must come to a dispute then,—we shall see which of us two can carry off the prize; and which, in our common concern for this young miracle of beauty, can make the strongest opposition to his rival's addresses. Muster your forces, friend, and stand on your guard, convinced that on my side no pains shall be spared.

SCENE II

Lelius, Mascaril.

Lelius. Ah! Mascaril.

Mascaril. What's the matter?

Lelius. Matter enough—in my amours everything falls out cross: Leander is smitten with Celia, and, by a most plaguy fatality, though I have changed my mistress, he still continues my rival.

Mascaril. Leander in love with Celia!

Lelius. He adores her, I tell thee.

Mascaril. So much the worse.

Lelius. Indeed! So much the worse, why that's what plagues me: however, I should be in the wrong to despair; having thee for a reserve, I ought to take courage; I know thy intriguing genius never found anything difficult; thou shouldst be styled the Prince of Valets: I challenge the world to—

Mascaril. Good sir, a truce with this wheedling; when we poor pil-garlics are wanted to serve a turn, then are we the dearest, most incomparable creatures: but another time, on the least disgust, we are scoundrels that should be cudgelled within an inch of our lives.

Lelius. Nay, faith, thou dost me wrong by that invective.—But after all, to talk of the lovely captive—tell me, is there a heart so savage or insensible as to be proof against such

charms? For my part, in her whole conversation, as well as mien, I see the strongest evidence of her being nobly descended: I am persuaded that Heaven conceals her true pedigree under this mean appearance, and cares not yet to discover it.

Mascaril. You are extremely romantic, sir, with your fine chimeras. But what part may be allotted to Pandolph in these same affairs? He is your father, at least he is pleased to call himself so. You know very well how easily his choler is moved, and how handsomely he can swear at you when your behaviour happens to be offensive to him. He has passed his word to Anselm, that you shall marry Hippolyta; judging, I suppose, that 'tis in matrimony alone he can find anything to tame you: now, should he once come to discover that, rejecting his choice, you are a slave to an object he knows nothing of; and that the fatal power of this ridiculous love has taken you off from all regard to your duty; Heaven knows what a storm will then burst about your ears; and what fine lectures you will be entertained with.

Lelius. Pshaw! prithee a truce with thy rhetoric.

Mascaril. Rather a truce with your politics, they are none of the best—and you ought to endeavour—

Lelius. Don't you know, sir, that nobody gets any good by crossing me? That I give but very scurvy wages for advice, and that a preaching lackey consults his own interest but very ill by it?

Mascaril. [Aside.] So, he's in a passion now. All I said was merely by way of joke, and to try your temper; have I any of the four features of a reformer about me? And is Mascaril, do you think, a foe to nature? You know the contrary, and that 'tis most certain the world can tax me with nothing but excess of humanity.—Laugh at the lectures of an old grey-beard of a father; spur on, I tell you, and mind them not; of my conscience, I'm of opinion that these crabbed dotards are made to distract us with their silly stories; and being virtuous through necessity, they enviously hope to deprive young people of all the pleasures of life. You know my talent, I'm absolutely at your service.

Lelius. Ay! By this kind of talk thou art sure to charm me. To proceed, my passion, when I discovered it, was not disregarded by those fair eyes from whence it sprung; but, this instant, Leander has given me to know, that he is preparing to deprive me of my Celia. Therefore let us dispatch, and ransack thy brain for the most speedy method to worst him; find

me out any trick, fetch, cheat, or device, to disconcert the pretensions of my rival.

Mascaril. Stay, let me think a little of this matter. [Aside.] What can I contrive to help out at this pinch?

Lelius. Well, the stratagem?

Mascaril. Poh! What haste you are in! My brain must always march fair and soft—I've nicked your business; you must—No, I am out;—but if you would go—

Lelius. Whither?

Mascaril. That's but a shallow device neither. I thought of one that—

Lelius. What, prithee?

Mascaril. That would not drive well.—But could you not?

Lelius. Could I not what?

Mascaril. No, you could not do it at all. Talk with Anselm—

Lelius. And what can I say to him?

Mascaril. Nay, very true, that's out of the frying-pan into the fire. Something must be done however. Go to Trufaldin.

Lelius. What to do?

Mascaril. I don't know.

Lelius. There's no bearing this, in short. You make me mad with these frivolous tales.

Mascaril. Why, sir, were you but reasonably strong in ready cash, we had no need to stand dreaming here to find what way we should take; and we might, by purchasing this slave out of hand, effectually put a bar to your rival's preventing, or insulting you. Trufaldin, who watches her very narrowly, is under some apprehensions of the gang of gipsies who left her here in pawn; and could he make his pennyworths of her, (which they have tired his patience in waiting for) to my certain knowledge, he would be glad at heart to sell her; for in short, he always lived like a true curmudgeon. He would submit to the strappada for a twelve-penny-piece. Gold is the god to which he pays supreme adoration; but the plague on't is—

Lelius. What is it?

Mascaril. That your father is just such another covetous hunk, who will not allow you to dispose of his ducats, as you would do. That at present we have not one engine in reserve which can operate to the opening of the least purse for your assistance. But let us endeavour to come at the speech of Celia for a moment, to know her sentiments in this affair; this is her window.

Lelius. But Trufaldin stands close sentry upon her day and night; be cautious.

Mascaril. Keep you still in that corner. Thanks to our stars; here she comes most apropos.

SCENE III

Celia, Lelius, Mascaril.

Lelius. Ah! madam, what obligations have I to Heaven for offering to my sight those heavenly charms you are blest with! And whatever piercing pain those dear eyes may have given me, I have inexpressible pleasure at the sight of them.

Celia. My heart, sir, which, with good reason is astonished at this speech of yours, is not conscious that my eyes have injured any person. And if in any instance they have wronged you, I can assure you it was wholly without my leave.

Lelius. Oh! no, their glances are too charming to do me any injury. I count it my chief glory to cherish the wounds they give me; and—

Mascaril. Why, you are mounting a note too high. This style is by no means to our present purpose; let us spend our time better; let us know of her quickly what—

Trufaldin. [Within.] Celia!

Mascaril. [To *Lelius.*] Well?

Lelius. O cruel accident! What business has this plaguy old fellow to interrupt us?

Mascaril. Go, withdraw, I'll find something to say to him.

SCENE IV

Trufaldin, Celia, Mascaril, and Lelius retired into a corner.

Trufaldin. [To *Celia.*] What are you doing without there? and what mighty care urges you, you whom I have positively discharged from speaking to any mortal whatever?

Celia. I was formerly acquainted with this honest young man, you have no need at all to be suspicious of him.

Mascaril. Is this the great Mr. Trufaldin?

Celia. Yes, the very same.

Mascaril. Sir, I am your most devoted servant, and it gives me extreme pleasure, that I have the honour, with all deference, to pay my compliments to a gentleman whose name the world rings with.

Trufaldin. Your most humble servant.

Mascaril. I may incommod you perhaps. But this is a person I have seen elsewhere, who has convinced me of the great skill she has in fortune-telling; I had a desire to consult her a little about a certain affair.

Trufaldin. How! Were you a dabbler then in the black art?

Celia. No, sir, my skill lies entirely in the white.

Mascaril. The case then is this. The master whom I serve languishes for a fair one, who has captivated him. He would very gladly disclose the flame, which preys upon him, to the beauteous object whom he adores. But a wakeful dragon that guards the treasure, in spite of all his attempts, has hitherto prevented him. And, what perplexes him still more, and completes his misery, is that he has just discovered a most formidable rival; so that I came to consult you, to know whether his amorous cares may have any ground to hope success, being well assured that from your mouth I may infallibly learn the secret which so nearly concerns us.

Celia. Under what planet was thy master born?

Mascaril. Under a planet never to alter his love.

Celia. Without your naming the object he sighs for, the art I am mistress of gives me information sufficient. This young lady has a soul, and knows how to support a noble pride even in her poverty. She's not of a temper to be too lavish in declaring the secret sentiments that may have been raised in her heart. But I know them as well as herself, and am going, with more composure of mind, in a few words to discover them all.

Mascaril. O prodigious power of magic virtue!

Celia. If your master piques himself upon his constancy in this point, and virtue alone be the spring of his design, let him be no longer under apprehensions that he shall sigh in vain. There's room enough to hope; and the fort he wishes to gain is not averse to parley, and would be glad to surrender.

Mascaril. That's something considerable; but this fort depends on a governor who may be hard to gain.

Celia. There lies all the misfortune.

Mascaril. [Aside.] Deuce take the troublesome cur, how steadily he eyes us.

Celia. Now for your lesson in what manner you are to behave.

Lelius. [Joining them.] Pray, Mr. Trufaldin, give yourself no farther uneasiness; 'twas purely in obedience to my order that he has paid you this visit; and I dispatched this trusty servant to you, with a tender of my service, and to treat with

you concerning this damsel, whose liberty I am willing to purchase ere long, provided that we two can fix upon a price.

Mascaril. [Aside.] Plague take the ass.

Trufaldin. Ho! ho! Which of the two to believe?—This story very much contradicts the former.

Mascaril. Sir, this pretty gentleman's head is turned; don't you know it?

Trufaldin. I know what I know—my mind misgave me that there was some plot ahatching here underground—Get you in [*To Celia.*] and let me not catch you at these liberties again.—As for you two, who are a brace of downright bites, or I am much mistaken, put your pipes better in tune, the next time you would play upon me.

SCENE V

Lelius, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Excellent well! I wish, without a compliment, that he had drubbed us both together for company. What business had you to show yourself, and, like a blunderer as you are, come and give me the lie in all that I had been saying.

Lelius. I thought I did right.

Mascaril. Oh! 'twas most wisely judged. But hang it, this action ought not to surprise me; you are so fruitful in counterplots of this nature, that your wrong-headed freaks can astonish the world no longer.

Lelius. Good Heaven! How am I rated for nothing! What, is the damage so great as to be irretrievable? In short, if thou canst not give me possession of Celia, at least take care all Leander's schemes be broken, that he may not be beforehand with me, in purchasing the fair one. But lest my presence should be further mischievous, I leave thee.

Mascaril. [Alone.] You do well.—To say the truth, now, money would be a staunch and powerful advocate in our cause; but this spring failing us, we must betake ourselves to some other.

SCENE VI

Anselm, Mascaril.

Anselm. Body o' me, 'tis a strange age, this of ours. I am perfectly ashamed on't; never was there such love of wealth, and never so much difficulty to come by one's own. Debts

nowadays, be as careful as we can, are like children which are conceived with pleasure, but brought forth with pain. Money comes sweetly into the purse. But when our time comes that we are to be delivered of it, then it is the labouring pangs seize us. E'en let it be so, come 'tis no trifle this, of receiving a brace of hundred pieces that have been due any time these two long years; nay 'tis a great mercy.

Mascaril. [Aside.] Od's my life! What glorious game is there! To shoot 'em flying now! Hist, I must try to get a little nearer, that I may tickle the trout a little. I have a lullaby song by heart will send him to rest. [Joining him.] Anselm, I have just been visiting—

Anselm. Who, prithee?

Mascaril. Your Nerina.

Anselm. What does the hard-hearted gipsy say about me?

Mascaril. She's all on fire for you.

Anselm. She?

Mascaril. And loves you so, it would pity one's very heart.

Anselm. How happy thou makest me!

Mascaril. The poor thing is even at death's door with love.

—Anselm, my precious, cries she at every turn, when shall Hymen unite our hearts? When wilt thou deign to quench these flames?

Anselm. But why should she have concealed 'em from me all this while? These girls, in troth, are strange dissesemblers! Mascaril, without flattery, what sayest thou? Though something in years, yet I have person sufficient still to please the eye.

Mascaril. Yes, truly, that face of yours is a good passable face still; if it is not of the handsomest, it is very agreeable.

Anselm. So that—

Mascaril. [Endeavouring to take the purse.] So that she dotes on you. And regards you no longer—

Anselm. What?—

Mascaril. But as a husband. And fully designs—

Anselm. And fully designs?—

Mascaril. And fully designs, come what will, to steal your purse.

Anselm. Ha!

Mascaril. [Sliding the purse to the ground.] A buss from you, mouth to mouth.

Anselm. Hoh! I understand you. Come hither, the next time you see her, be sure to say all the fine things you can of me.

Mascaril. Let me alone.

Anselm. Adieu.

Mascaril. Heaven guide you.

Anselm. [Returning.] Hold! In troth I had like to have been guilty of a strange neglect; and you might justly have accused me of slighting you. I engage thee, here, to assist in carrying on my amour; I receive from thee a most agreeable piece of news, without the least present to reward thy diligence. Here, be sure you remember—

Mascaril. O, dear sir, pray don't.

Anselm. Permit me.

Mascaril. I won't indeed. I do this without any regard to interest.

Anselm. I know thou dost. But however—

Mascaril. I tell you I will not, Anselm; I am a man of honour, this offends me.

Anselm. Fare thee well then! *Mascaril.*

Mascaril. [Aside.] Tedious prattle!

Anselm. [Returning.] I have good mind thou shouldst treat this dear creature for me. I'll give thee something to buy her a ring, or any other toy thou shalt think proper.

Mascaril. No, no, pray have done with your money; without giving yourself any concern about it, I'll make the present; I have a modish ring left in my hands, which you may pay me for afterwards, if it fits her.

Anselm. So let it be then, give it her for me. But above all, manage matters so, as to cherish in her a most earnest desire to make me her own.

SCENE VII

Lelius, Anselm, Mascaril.

Lelius. [Taking up the purse.] Whose purse is this?

Anselm. O bless me! I dropped it, and should have verily believed afterwards that somebody had robbed me of it. I am highly obliged to you for this kind care, which has savoured me infinite vexation, and restored me my money. I'll make haste home, and discharge me of my burden.

SCENE VIII

Lelius, Mascaril

Mascaril. 'Tis officiously, most officiously done, let me die

Lelius. In troth, had not I come, the money had been lost for him.

Mascaril. Yes, to be sure, you do wonders, and have paid it off to-day with a most exquisite judgment, and supreme good fortune. We shall thrive amain, go on as you have begun.

Lelius. What's the matter then? what have I done?

Mascaril. In plain English, you have done like an ass. I can say it, and I ought to say it.—He knows very well how low his father keeps him; that a formidable rival sticks close on our skirts; yet for all this, when I strike a bold stroke to oblige him, of which I take all the shame and hazard upon myself.—

Lelius. How! Was this—

Mascaril. Yes, ninny, it was to release the captive that I palmed the money, which your great care has balked us of.

Lelius. If that's the case I am to blame. But who could have imagined it?

Mascaril. It really required a most refined imagination.

Lelius. You should have tipped me the wink, to have given me notice of the affair.

Mascaril. Yes, indeed, I ought to have my eyes behind me. In the name of Jove, be quiet, and let's hear no more of these silly speeches. Another person, after all this, would perhaps give up the cause. But I have a master-stroke just now come in my head, which I design to put immediately to the proof, on this sole condition though, that if—

Lelius. No, I promise thee, neither to meddle nor make, from this time forward, by word, or by deed.

Mascaril. Hence then; the very sight of you kindles my wrath.

Lelius. But prithee, of all things dispatch, for fear this business—

Mascaril. Once more, I tell you, begone. I'll set about it, out of hand. [Exit *Lelius*.] Bring but this project once to bear, if it takes, as I think it must, 'twill be a most exquisite piece of roguery. But let's to our experiment.—Good, here's my very man.

SCENE IX

Pandolph, Mascaril.

Pandolph. Mascaril.

Mascaril. Sir?

Pandolph. To speak freely, I am much dissatisfied with my son.

Mascaril. With my master? You are not the only person

who complains of him. His insupportable ill conduct in everything, puts me every moment to the extremity of my patience.

Pandolph. I thought for all that, you had a very good understanding together.

Mascaril. I? Believe it not, sir. I catch at all opportunities of throwing in a hint about his duty, then are we perpetually at daggers drawn; this very moment we had a quarrel again about the match with Hippolyta, in which I find he runs counter; and by a most palpable act of disobedience violates all the respect due to a father.

Pandolph. A quarrel?

Mascaril. Yes, a quarrel, and a desperate one too.

Pandolph. I was strangely deceived then. I took it for granted, that do what he would, he was sure of thee for a second.

Mascaril. Me? See what this world's come to! How is innocence always oppressed! Were you but duly apprised of my integrity, you would give me the additional pay of a tutor, whereas I am only hired as his servant. Yes, you yourself could not say more than I do, to bring him to order. In the name of goodness, sir, say I to him very often, no longer fail with the first wind that blows; keep within bounds; observe the worthy father which Heaven has blessed you with; what reputation he has in the world; forbear to grieve his righteous soul, and live, as he does, like a man of honour.

Pandolph. That was talking to the purpose. And what could he answer thee?

Mascaril. Answer? Why only sham-stuff to perplex me. Not but at the bottom he has really the principles of honour, which he derived from you; but reason, at present, is not his master. Might I be allowed to advise with freedom, you should soon see him brought to your hand with little or no trouble.

Pandolph. Speak out.

Mascaril. It's a secret which is as much as my ears are worth, should it be discovered; but I can trust it, with full assurance, to your prudence.

Pandolph. You say well.

Mascaril. Know then that your schemes are sacrificed to the fond impressions a certain slave has made upon your son.

Pandolph. I had been told of it before; but it concerns me more, as I have it from thy mouth.

Mascaril. You see how much of a confidant I am.—

Pandolph. Truly I am overjoyed at it.

Mascaril. In the meantime do you really wish to recall him to his duty, without any bustle? You must—I am afraid still somebody should surprise us; should he come to the knowledge of this conversation, it would be over with me—you must, as I was saying, to knock all this affair on the head at once, go underhand, and purchase this slave that's so much idolised, and send her beyond sea directly. Anselm is a great companion of Trufaldin's, let him go buy her for you this very morning. Afterwards, if you are minded to put her into my hands, I have acquaintance with some merchants, and dare answer to make the money of her she shall cost you, and so send her a packing in spite of your son. For, in short, if we would have him disposed for matrimony, we must first divert this growing passion; and besides, admitting he were once resolved to wear the yoke you design for him, yet this other girl, having it in her power to revive his foolish fancy, might prejudice him against matrimony again.

Pandolph. Mighty well argued. This advice pleases me much. Here comes Anselm; go thy way; I'll do my best to get immediate possession of this plaguy captive, and put her into thy hands to finish the rest.

Mascaril. [Alone.] Good. Now to inform my master of this. Long live all knavery, and knaves also.

SCENE X

Hippolyta, Mascaril.

Hippolyta. Ay, traitor, is this thy way of serving me? I overheard all, and saw thy juggling. Had I not, could I possibly have believed it? Thou drivest a trade of cheating, and has sold me a most precious bargain. Thou hadst promised me, varlet, and I had all the reason in the world to expect it, that thou wouldest favour my passion for Leander, that thy address and diligence should find means to disengage me from Lelius, whom they would force me to marry, and save me from my father's project; and all this while thou art doing quite the contrary. But thou shalt find thyself much mistaken.—I know a sure method of breaking off the purchase thou art driving at so eagerly; and I'll go immediately—

Mascaril. Hey, hey! how touchy you are! You take snuff in an instant; and without staying to inquire whether you have reason or not, you play the little fury with me. I'm in the

wrong, and ought to make your words good, without striking another stroke, since you abuse me so outrageously.

Hippolyta. With what illusion dost thou propose to dazzle my eyes, traitor? Canst thou deny what I have just now heard?

Mascaril. Not at all. But you must know, that this whole contrivance is calculated directly to do you service. That this sly piece of advice which has no appearance of guile, brings both the old woodcocks into the noose at once. That all the pains I have taken to come at Celia by their means, was for no purpose on earth but to give Lelius the possession of her; and to order matters so, that Anselm, being worked up into an excess of passion to see himself imposed upon, and balked of his imagined son-in-law, might turn his choice on the side of Leander.

Hippolyta. What! hast thou formed all this mighty project, by which I have been so much ruffled, for me, Mascaril?

Mascaril. Yes, for you. But since my good offices are so ill received, that I must bear to this unmerciful degree with your humours, and further, by way of reward for my services, you come here with a haughty air, and treat me as a pitiful fellow, a scoundrel, a common cheat, I'll presently take care to correct the mistake I have been guilty of, and break off my enterprise out of hand.

Hippolyta. [Holding him.] Nay, prithee be not so severe upon me, and forgive these sallies of a sudden passion.

Mascaril. No, no, let me go. I have it yet in my power to avert the stroke you are so terribly offended at. From this time forward you shall have no reason to complain of my meddling too much. Yes, you shall have my master, I promise you, you shall.

Hippolyta. For Heaven's sake, good lad, be not in such a passion, I judged too hardly of thee, I was to blame, I confess I was. [Pulls out her purse.] But I intend this shall make atonement for my fault. Canst thou find in thy heart to quit me in this manner?

Mascaril. No, I cannot, strive whatever I will. But your hasty temper is very shocking. Consider with yourself, there is nothing wounds a noble spirit so much, as to find the least imputation upon its honour.

Hippolyta. 'Tis true, I gave thee some very coarse language, but accept of this brace of guineas to heal thy wounds.

Mascaril. Fy! I had no such meaning; I am very tender in those points; but my passion begins to abate a little already. We must bear with something from our friends.

Hippolyta. Do you think you can bring my design to bear after all? And do you believe these bold projects will have that happy success in my amour which you seem to promise me?

Mascaril. Don't you sit upon thorns on that account. I have springs enough ready to set variety of engines at work, and though this stratagem should fall short of our wishes, what this can't do, another shall.

Hippolyta. Depend upon it Hippolyta will, at least, not be ungrateful.

Mascaril. 'Tis not the hope of gain that entices me.

Hippolyta. Your master beckons you, and would speak with you; I leave thee. But remember to do all thou canst for me.

SCENE XI

Lelius, Mascaril.

Lelius. What the deuce hast thou to do there? You promise wonders, but your slackness in performance is not to be paralleled. Had not my good genius prevented me, my affairs had ere this been turned upside down. Then farewell happiness, farewell joy; I had been given up to irretrievable sorrow; in short, had I not been in this very place, Anselm had got the captive, and I had been deprived of her. He was just carrying her off; but I parried the thrust, warded off the blow, and prevailed so far upon the fears of Trufaldin, as to make him keep the girl at home.

Mascaril. Thrice already! when we come to ten we'll score up.—'Twas by my own contrivance, eternal shatterbrains! that Anselm undertook the desirable purchase. She was to have been left absolutely in my hands, when in comes your cursed officiousness between us. And think you that I love you well enough to start a fresh project? I would sooner a thousand times be a mule, become a pitcher, a cabbage, a lantern, a moping screech-owl, or that Monsieur Satan should twist your neck about.

Lelius. [Alone.] I must have him to some tavern, and let him discharge his fury on the glasses.

ACT II

SCENE I

Lelius, Mascaril.

Mascaril. I was forced to yield to your desires at last, in spite of all my protestations, I could hold it out no longer; and now am I embarked in fresh difficulties to support your interest, which I was fully resolved to have given up. So soft a fool am I. Had Dame Nature made me o' t'other sex, I leave you to guess what would have happened. Nevertheless, don't you go upon this presumption, and give your back-stroke to the project I am about; don't come blundering athwart me, and dash my expectations. Then as to Anselm, we shall make your excuse to him in such a manner as to gain every point we can wish. But should your indiscretion blaze out again hereafter, farewell, say I, all care of mine, for the darling object.

Lelius. No, I shall grow wiser, I tell thee; fear not, you shall see—

Mascaril. Remember it well. I have formed a hardy stratagem in your favour. Your father discovers an extreme laziness in not completing all your wishes by his death. I have just killed him (in words, I mean) I blaze it abroad that the good man, being surprised with an apoplexy, is departed this life. But first, to counterfeit this death the better, I have sent him packing to his country seat. They have brought him news, by my contrivance too, that the labourers at work in his building, among the foundations which they are now a-laying, have accidentally struck upon a hoard of money. Away flies he in an instant. And as his whole family, excepting us two, have attended him into the country, I kill him to-day, in everyone's imagination, and proceed to bury him in effigy. In short, I have let you into the whole design I have laid for you; play your part well; and as to the character I am to sustain, if you catch me but a-faltering in one syllable of it, tell me absolutely I am no other than a blunderbuss.

SCENE II

Lelius. [Alone.] To say the truth on't, his wit has found out a strange method to bring my wishes to their full accomplishment; but when one is heartily enamoured with a beautiful

object, what would we not do to be happy? If love is a handsome excuse enough for committing a crime, sure it may be sufficient for a harmless piece of imposture, which love to-day has forced me to comply with, by the soothing hope of the happy consequence that will accrue from it. Bless me! How expeditious they are! I see they are entered into discourse about it already; now to get my part ready.

SCENE III

Mascaril, Anselm.

Mascaril. The news may very reasonably surprise you.

Anselm. To die in this manner!

Mascaril. He was very much to blame, most certainly. I owe him a grudge for an affront of this kind.

Anselm. Not to have time only to be sick a little!

Mascaril. No, never was man in such a hurry to die.

Anselm. And how does Lelius behave?

Mascaril. He raves, and has lost all temper; he has beat himself black and blue in several places, and resolves to follow his papa into the grave. In short, to have done, the excess of his grief has determined me to bury the deceased with the utmost speed, for fear this object, which feeds his melancholy, should tempt him to some fatal extremity.

Anselm. No matter, you ought to defer it till the evening. Besides that, I have a strong desire to see him once more. He that buries a friend too hastily, very often murders him; for a man is frequently thought dead when he has only the appearance of being so.

Mascaril. I'll warrant ye him dead to all intents and purposes. But now, to return to what we were talking of, Lelius has resolved, (and a meritorious action it will be) to regale his father with a splendid funeral, and to cheer the deceased a little on his hard fate, by the pleasure of seeing these honours done to his manes; he's left in great circumstances, but as he is a novice in his affairs, and cannot yet perceive but the gross of his estate lies in other parts, or what he has here consists in bills, he would beg of you to excuse the too great heat he showed of late in consequence of the law-suit, and to lend him at least sufficient to defray this last duty—

Anselm. I understand you, and will go see him.

Mascaril. [Alone.] Hitherto, at least, everything runs

smooth as possible; now to secure that the rest shall answer. And, lest we should split in the very harbour, let us steer the vessel with all hands aloft, and a sharp look out.

SCENE IV

Anselm, Lelius, Mascalil.

Anselm. Let us go out; I cannot, but with the utmost anguish of heart, see him huddled up in this strange manner. Poor soul! So soon gone! He was alive and well but this morning.

Mascalil. One may sometimes rid a great deal of ground in a little time.

Lelius. [Weeping.] Oh!

Anselm. Nay, pray, dear Lelius! In short, he was but a man; even Rome can grant no dispensation from death.

Lelius. Oh!

Anselm. It dashes all human glory without the least warning, and has ever had a particular spite against it.

Lelius. Oh!

Anselm. This merciless devourer would not lose one grip of his murderous teeth for the prayers of mankind; all the world must feel them.

Lelius. Oh!

Mascalil. You might as well preach to the walls, sir; this sorrow is too deep-rooted to be plucked up.

Anselm. If, notwithstanding all these arguments, you must still persist in your sorrow, my dear Lelius, endeavour at least to moderate it.

Lelius. Oh!

Mascalil. He won't do it. I know his humour.

Anselm. However, according to the message of your servant, I bring you here as much money as will suffice to perform the funeral obsequies of a father——

Lelius. Oh! Oh!

Mascalil. How has that word increased his grief! 'tis death to him but to think of this misfortune.

Anselm. I'm sensible you will find by the good man's papers, that I stand debtor for a much greater sum; but had I, upon computation, not owed you a farthing, you should have had the free command of my purse; please to take it, I am entirely at your service, and shall make it appear that I am so.

Lelius. [Going.] Oh!

Mascaril. What a deep concern is my master under!

Anselm. Mascaril, I think it proper he should give me a discharge under his hand, were it but in two words.

Mascaril. Oh!

Anselm. What turn things may take is uncertain.

Mascaril. Oh!

Anselm. Get him to sign me the note I require.

Mascaril. Alas! How should he comply with your desire in the condition he's in? Give him time to get rid of his grief; and, when his troubles abate a little, I'll take care immediately to get you your security. Adieu, I find my heart swell with grief, and I must go take my fill of weeping with him. Hi! hi!

Anselm. [Alone.] This world is full of many crosses; every man feels them, more or less continually; and never here below—

SCENE V

Pandolph, Anselm.

Anselm. Heavens! How I tremble! 'Tis Pandolph that walks! Could he be really dead? How meagre his face looks since his death! Mercy o' me! Approach me not, I beseech you, I have too strong an abhorrence to elbow a ghost.

Pandolph. Whence can this whimsical fright come?

Anselm. Tell me at a distance what business brings you here? If you take so much pains to bid me farewell, it is too ceremonious, and in good earnest, I could have dispensed with the compliment. If your soul is in purgatory and wants masses, why you shall have 'em upon my word, and don't fright one at this rate. On the faith of a terrified man, I'll immediately set prayers agoing for you, to your very heart's content.

Then vanish away,
And good Heaven, I pray,
Of joys be the donor,
Unto your dead honour.

Pandolph. [Laughing.] In spite of all my indignation, I can't help carrying on the jest.

Anselm. Strange! You're wondrous merry for a dead man!

Pandolph. Why, is this all joke, pray tell me, or is it sheer madness that treats a living man as if he was dead.

Anselm. Alas! You must be dead, I myself just now saw you.

Pandolph. What? could I die without knowing anything of the matter?

Anselm. As soon as Mascaril told me the news, it went to the very heart of me.

Pandolph. But, in sober sadness, are you dreaming? Are you broad awake yet? Don't you know me?

Anselm. You are clothed with an aerial body, which counterfeits your true one, but which may take another shape in a moment. I dread seeing you swell up to the size of a giant, and all your features hideously distorted. For goodness sake, don't take any shocking figure; I have been scared sufficiently for this time.

Pandolph. At another time, Anselm, the simplicity which accompanies this credulity of yours, would have given me most excellent diversion. And I should have carried on the pleasant humour a little longer; but this story of my death, joined with that forged one of the treasure, which I was told upon the road there was nothing at all in, raises in my mind a just suspicion that Mascaril is a rogue, and a rogue of rogues, whom neither fear nor conscience can restrain, and who has strange hidden ways to bring his projects about.

Anselm. What, have they played upon me then? Made a noodle of me? Troth, reason o' mine, you should be wondrous pretty! Let me feel a little that I may be satisfied. 'Tis really the very man. A pox take me for an oaf as I am! As you love me, don't divulge this story, they'll work it up into a farce that will shame me for ever. But, Pandolph, give me your assistance to get my money back, which I lent them for your funeral.

Pandolph. The money, say you? Hoh! there the shoe pinches, there lies the hidden stress of the whole affair. To your cost be it. For my part, I shan't give myself much trouble about it; I'll go get the best information I can about this matter, as it affects Mascaril, and if I catch him tardy, cost what it will, I'll make him swing for't.

Anselm. [Alone.] And I, for giving credit, like a sheer dupe as I am, to a scoundrel, must in one day then lose both my sense and my money. It finely becomes me, faith, to wear these grey hairs, and to run so readily into playing the fool. Not to stay to examine a little upon the first report—but I see—

SCENE VI

Lelius, Anselm.

Lelius. Now with this master-key I shall have access to Trufaldin, with all the ease imaginable.

Anselm. As far as I perceive, your grief has left you.

Lelius. What say ye? No, it can never leave a heart which desires for ever to cherish it.

Anselm. I came back immediately, to tell you frankly, that I had made a mistake with you a little while ago; that among the louis d'ors, though they look very good, I had, without minding it, put some which I look upon to be counterfeit; and I have brought money enough about me to change them. The intolerable impudence of our clippers and coiners is grown to such a height in this state, that one can't receive any money now which is not suspicious. In troth, 'twould be doing well to have them all hanged.

Lelius. You oblige me very much in being willing to take them again, but I saw none among them that were bad, as I thought.

Anselm. I shall know 'em very well. Let's see 'em, let's see 'em.—Is here all?

Lelius. Yes.

Anselm. So much the better. At last, my dear treasure, I grasp thee again; once more into my pocket; and as for you, my gallant sharper, you'll never touch one penny of them more. You kill people, I warrant you, while they are in full health; and what would you ha' done then with me, a poor crazy father-in-law? In troth, I was going to be rarely holp up with a prop for my family, and had like to have pitched upon a most discreet son-in-law, in you, good sir! Go, go, die yourself for mere shame and vexation.

Lelius. [Alone.] A palpable hit, I must own; what a thunder-stroke is this! How could he come at our stratagem so soon?

SCENE VII

Lelius, Mascalil.

Mascalil. What! were you gone out then? I have been looking for you everywhere. Well, have we gained our point at last? I'll give the cleanest bite of 'em all, fix trials to do the same. Come, give me the pelf, that I may go directly and buy

the slave, your rival will be strangely astonished when this is done.

Lelius. Ah, my dear boy, the tables are much changed; wouldst thou think what a cross trick fortune has played me.

Mascaril. What! What can it be?

Lelius. Anselm, being informed of the cheat, has just now got every farthing again that he had lent us, under a pretence of changing some pieces he suspected.

Mascaril. You do but joke, I suppose.

Lelius. 'Tis too true.

Mascaril. In good earnest?

Lelius. In good earnest; I am inconsolable for it; you'll be angry with me beyond measure.

Mascaril. I, sir? More fool I then; anger is a torment, and I am resolved to make myself happy, come what will. Be Celia, after all, captive or free; let Leander purchase her, or stay she where she is; for my part, I shall be just as much concerned on one side of the question, as o' t'other.

Lelius. Nay, don't be so indifferent to me, but be a little more indulgent to this trifle of imprudence. Setting aside this last misfortune, will you not confess I had done wonders; and that as to the sham funeral, I imposed on the world with a grief so natural, that the most sharp sighted would have thought it real.

Mascaril. You have, indeed, good reason to commend yourself.

Lelius. Oh! I am to blame, and I'm willing to own it, but if thou hadst ever any regard for me, redress this disaster, and continue thy assistance.

Mascaril. I kiss your hand; I have not leisure.

Lelius. Mascaril! My dear boy!

Mascaril. No.

Lelius. Do me this favour.

Mascaril. No. I won't stir a step.

Lelius. If you are inflexible, I'll kill myself.

Mascaril. Do so; 'tis right you should.

Lelius. Can't I possibly work upon thee?

Mascaril. No.

Lelius. Dost thou see my sword ready drawn?

Mascaril. Yes.

Lelius. I'll plunge it to the hilts.

Mascaril. Do just what you please.

Lelius. Would it not grieve thee to take away my life?

Mascaril. No.

Lelius. Adieu, Mascaril.

Mascaril. B'y', Master Lelius.

Lelius. What?—

Mascaril. Dispatch yourself then quick. Pshaw! Here's tedious haranguing indeed!

Lelius. You'd have me play the fool, faith, and kill myself, that you might come in for my clothes.

Mascaril. Did not I know, in short, this was all but grimace; and however our sparks may swear they'll do the business, they are not so forward nowadays to kill themselves in good earnest.

SCENE VIII

Trufaldin, Leander, Lelius, Mascaril.

Trufaldin taking Leander aside, and whispering to him.

Lelius. What do I see? my rival and Trufaldin together! He's purchasing Celia. Oh! I tremble for fear!

Mascaril. There's no doubt, but he'll do all he can; and if he has money he may do all he will; for my part I'm in raptures at it. This is the fruit of your hair-brained blunders, and your impatience.

Lelius. What must I do? Say, advise me.

Mascaril. I don't know.

Lelius. Stay, I'll go pick a quarrel with him.

Mascaril. And what good will come of that?

Lelius. What wouldest thou have me do, to ward off this blow?

Mascaril. Go, go, I forgive you; I cast an eye of pity on you once more, leave me to watch 'em, I am apt to think, I shall fish out his secret by fairer means. [Exit *Lelius*.]

Trufaldin. [To *Leander*.] When the messengers come by and by, the thing is absolutely done. [Exit *Trufaldin*.]

Mascaril. [Aside, and going out.] I must trap him, and get to be trusted with his designs, that I may baffle 'em the easier.

Leander. [Alone.] Thanks to Heaven, my happiness is now beyond the reach of chance. I have found the way to ensure it, and have no more to fear. Whatever a rival may undertake hereafter, it will be no more in his power to hurt me.

SCENE IX

Leander, Mascaril.

Mascaril. [Speaking this speech within, and then coming on the stage.] Oh! Oh! Help! Murder! My brains are beat out! Help! Murder! Oh! Oh! Oh! Traitor! Barbarian!

Leander. Whence comes that noise? What's the matter? What have they done to you?

Mascaril. He has laid me on, two hundred blows with a cudgel.

Leander. Who?

Mascaril. Lelius.

Leander. And for what reason?

Mascaril. For a mere trifle has he turned me away, and mauled me in a most merciless manner.

Leander. Fy! He is really much to blame.

Mascaril. But either I am a mere thing of clouts, or I swear bloodily, I'll be revenged. Yes, Mr. Thresher, with a vengeance to you, I shall give you to know people's bones are not to be broke for nothing. Though I'm but a valet, I am a man of honour; and after having employed me four years as a servant, you should not ha' paid me off with the twangs of a sapling; nor have affronted me in so sensible a part as that of the shoulder. I tell you once more, I shall find a way to revenge myself. A certain slave hits your palate, does she indeed? And I must be pitched on to get her for you, must I? Yes, and I will order matters so, deuce take me if I don't, that somebody else shall carry her.

Leander. Hear me, Mascaril, and lay aside your passion. I always liked thee, and always wished from my heart, that a young fellow of spirit, and trusty as thou art, could once take a thorough fancy to my service. In short, if thou thinkest the thing worth thy acceptance, if thou hast a mind to serve me, from this moment I retain thee.

Mascaril. With all my heart, sir, and so much the rather because propitious fortune offers me a handsome revenge in serving you; and that in the very pains I take to please you, I shall find a punishment for the brute I have left. In a word, by my dexterity Celia and you—

Leander. My passion has already done that office for itself; fired with that object, fair without a blemish, I have just made the purchase; for a price, too, much below the market.

Mascaril. How! Is Celia yours then?

Leander. You should see her appear, were I but absolute master of my actions. But alas, 'tis my father who is so. Since he is resolved, as I understand by a letter brought me, to fix my marriage with Hippolyta, I am cautious lest this transaction, coming to his ears, should exasperate him. Therefore in my bargain with Trufaldin (for I am just come from his house) I acted entirely in the name of another. The bargain struck, my ring was pitched on as the token, on sight of which he was immediately to deliver Celia. I am studying first ways and means to conceal her from the eyes of others, who so much charms my own; to find, with all expedition, some commodious place where secretly to lodge this charming captive.

Mascaril. A little way out of town, lives an old relation of mine, whose house I can take the freedom to offer you; there you may place her very secure, without a possibility of anybody's knowing a syllable of the matter.

Leander. Faith, so I can. Thou hast pleased me to my wish. Here, take this, and go get possession of this fair one for my use. As soon as Trufaldin sets eyes on my ring the girl will be delivered into thy hands. Carry her me to that house, when—But hist! Hippolyta is here at our heels.

SCENE X

Hippolyta, Leander, Mascaril.

Hippolyta. Leander, I have some news, I ought to tell you; but would it be agreeable or disagreeable to you?

Leander. To judge of that and make answer off hand, one should know it.

Hippolyta. Give me your hand then; in our walk towards the church I may tell it you.

Leander. [To *Mascaril.*] Go, make haste, and serve me in that business without farther delay. [Exeunt.]

SCENE XI

Mascaril. [Alone.] Yes, I will serve you up a dish, dressed after my own fashion. Was there ever in the world so lucky a fellow? What a sudden ecstasy will this give my master! His mistress to fall into our hands in this manner! To derive his whole happiness from whence one would have expected

his ruin! To become thus happy too by the hands of a rival! After this great exploit, it is our pleasure that due preparations be made to paint us as a hero, crowned with laurel, and that under the portrait be inscribed in letters of gold, *Vivat Mascarillus Knavorum Imperator.*

SCENE XII

Trufaldin, Mascaril.

Mascaril. So ho there!

Trufaldin. What do you want?

Mascaril. This ring, if you know it, will inform you what business brought me hither.

Trufaldin. Yes, I know that ring again perfectly well; stay there a moment, I'll go fetch you the slave.

SCENE XIII

Trufaldin, Postman, Mascaril.

Postman. [To *Trufaldin.*] Do me the favour, sir, to direct me to the gentleman——

Trufaldin. To what gentleman?

Postman. I think his name is Trufaldin.

Trufaldin. Your business with him, pray? I am he.

Postman. Only to deliver this letter to him.

Trufaldin. [Reads.] "Providence, whose goodness is solicitous for my life, has just brought to my ears a most welcome report that my daughter, who was stole from me, at four years of age, by some strollers, is a slave with you, under the name of Celia. If ever you knew what it was to be a father, and you find yourself touched with the fondness of natural affection; preserve in your family this child, so dear to me, as if she were your own flesh and blood. I am setting out myself, on my journey to bring her back again; and shall, ere long, make you so handsome a recompense for your trouble, that from your own good fortune, (which I am determined to advance) you shall bless the day in which you were the occasion of mine."

MADRID.

Don Pedro de Gusman,
Marquis of Montalcana."

Trufaldin. Though no great faith is due to people of their country, they who sold her to me, told me positively, that I should soon see her fetched back by somebody or other; and

should have no reason to complain. Yet was I now, through the impatience of my temper, going to destroy the fruits of a mighty expectation.

[*To the Postman.*] One moment later, and you'd trudge all this way in vain. I was going, this instant, to give her up into his hands; but enough—I shall take all the care of her you can wish.

[*Exit Postman.*]

[*To Mascaril.*] And you, friend, you see what I have read, you'll tell him that sent you here, that I can't possibly keep my word; let him come and take his money again.

Mascaril. But the downright injustice you will do him.

Trufaldin. No more prating, but about your business.

Mascaril. [*Alone.*] Oh! The plaguy packet we have now received! Fortune has cleverly jilted me in the height of expectation. And in the nick of ill-luck comes this Spanish courier; may thunder and hail go with him.—Never certainly had so fine a beginning, in so short a time, such a sorrowful ending.

SCENE XIV

Lelius (laughing), Mascaril.

Mascaril. What gay transport of joy inspires you now?

Lelius. Let me have my laugh out before I tell thee.

Mascaril. By all means, let us laugh heartily, we have abundant reason so to do.

Lelius. Oh! I shall now have no more of thy expostulations: thou'lt have nothing to hit me o' the teeth with; thou who art always dinging in my ears that I ruin all thy artifices, like a busybody as I am. I have my own self played one of the cleanest pranks in the world; 'tis true I am something of the hastiest, and now and then a little too fiery. But for all this, when I have a mind to it, I have really as quick an invention as any man alive; and even thou thyself shalt own that what I have done must proceed from a reach of invention that few are masters of.

Mascaril. Let us know then what this wondrous invention of yours has done.

Lelius. By and by. My mind having been struck with a terrible panic upon seeing Trufaldin along with my rival, I was casting about with myself to find a remedy for that mischief; when, collecting my whole self within myself, I conceived, digested, and executed a stratagem, at sight of which all thine,

which thou makest such a rout with, ought beyond dispute to strike their colours.

Mascaril. But what may this be?

Lelius. May it please you to have a little patience.—I feigned a letter then with great exactness, as writ from a mighty grandee to Trufaldin, setting forth, that whereas he had heard, by great good luck, that a certain slave named Celia, in his possession, was a daughter of his, formerly kidnapped by a gang of thieves; it was his intention to come and redeem her; and he conjures him, at least, not to part with her; to take special care of her; that on this account he was setting out from Spain, and would make him amends for his care of her, by such noble presents, that he should never repent being the instrument of his happiness.

Mascaril. Mighty well.

Lelius. Hear me then: here's something much cleverer still. The letter I speak of was delivered to him; but canst thou imagine how? In such a nick of time, that the porter told me, had it not been for this droll trick, a fellow, who looked confoundedly balked, had carried her off that moment.

Mascaril. And could you do all this without selling yourself to the devil?

Lelius. Yes; wouldest thou have believed me capable of so subtle a piece of wit? At least commend my address, and the dexterity with which I have utterly disconcerted the well-laid scheme of my rival.

Mascaril. To be able to extol you according to your merit, I lack eloquence, and am unequal to the subject. Yes, sufficiently to display this sublime effort, this fine stratagem of war achieved before our eyes, this grand, this rare effect of an invention, which, in force, yields to no person's living, my tongue is too feeble, and would I had those of the most exquisitely learned, that I might sing in smoothest verse, at least, in learned prose.—That you will eternally continue, in spite of all can be said, the selfsame you have been all your days; that is to say, a mind turned cross o' the grain, a distempered reason, and always upon the fret; the reverse of good sense; a left-handed judgment, a pragmatical intermeddler, a loobily ass, a rash hair-brained puppy. What can I think of? A—thousand times beyond what I can express. This is but your panegyric in abridgment.

Lelius. Prithee, inform me, what puts thee into such a passion with me? Have I done anything? Clear up this matter to me.

Mascaril. No, you've done nothing at all; but don't come after me.

Lelius. I'll follow thee through the world, to find out this mystery.

Mascaril. Do so, come on then; get your legs in order, I shall find you something will work 'em.

Lelius. [Alone.] He has slipped me. Unspeakable misfortune! What can I make out of this discourse of his? And what ill office can I have possibly done myself?

ACT III

SCENE I

Mascaril. [Alone.] Peace, my good-nature, and plead no more; you are a fool, and I am determined not to do it. Yes, my anger, I confess, you are in the right on't.—To be for ever adoing, what a meddling coxcomb undoes, is too much patience, and I ought to give it up after he has defeated such glorious attempts.—But then let us argue the matter a little without heat; if I follow the bent of my passion, though justly, the world will say I sink under difficulties, that I find myself at the extremity of my subtlety: and what will then become of that public esteem which extols thee everywhere as a most sublime sharper, and which thou hast acquired on so many occasions, as never having been found short of inventions? Honour, Mascaril, is a glorious thing. Make no pause in thy noble labours; and whatever a master may have done to incense thee, complete the work, for thy own glory, not to oblige him.—But how! What canst thou do whilst the clearest streams are continually troubled by this adverse demon? Thou seest that he obliges thee every moment to shift thy purposes! and that 'tis beating the air but to pretend to stop that unbridled torrent which in a moment overturns the beautiful structures which thy art has raised. Well, yet one stroke more at least, out of stark love and kindness, let us sacrifice our pains, and hazard the success; and if he still persists to baffle our good fortune, agreed, let us withdraw all our succours. In the meantime our affairs would take no ill turn, if by this we could defeat our rival, and that Leander at last, tired with the chase, would leave us one whole day for what I have in my thoughts. Yes,

I have a most ingenious device working in my head, from which I could promise myself glorious success, could I get rid of this obstacle which stands in my way. Well, let's see whether this passion of his keeps its ground still.

SCENE II

Leander, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Sir, I've lost my labour, your chap flies off from his bargain.

Leander. He has himself given me an account of the whole affair, but there's a good deal more in it; I have discovered that all this pretty mystery of being carried off by gipsies, of a grandee for her father, who is just a setting out for this place from Spain, is nothing but a sheer stratagem, a merry touch, a mere amusement, a tale with which Lelius designed to stave off our purchase of Celia.

Mascaril. Do but see the roguery!

Leander. And yet for all this, Trufaldin is so possessed with this idle story, and swallows the bait of this shallow device so greedily, that he will not bear to be undeceived.

Mascaril. For this reason he'll watch her very narrowly for the future, and I see no room here to pretend to do anything farther.

Leander. If this girl appeared to me at first sight amiable, I now find her absolutely adorable; and I am in suspense whether I ought not to run the utmost lengths to make her my own. Even to reverse her fortune, by plighting her my faith, and change her servile into matrimonial chains.

Mascaril. Could you find in your heart to marry her?

Leander. I don't know. But in short, if her condition is something obscure, her graceful manner, and her virtue are winning charms, which have an incredible force to attract all hearts.

Mascaril. Her virtue, say you?

Leander. How! What's that you mutter? Go through with it, and explain yourself on that word virtue.

Mascaril. Sir, your countenance is changed all of a sudden, and I should do much better, perhaps, to hold my tongue.

Leander. No, no, speak out.

Mascaril. Well then, since you will have it, I am charitably disposed to help you to your eyesight again. This same wenc

Leander. Proceed.

Mascaril. Is the farthest in the world from being hard-hearted; in a corner she'll grant you a favour without a struggle for it; and after all, take my word for it, her heart is not made of flint, to any man who knows how to take her in the mood. She looks as if sugar would not melt in her mouth, and would pass for a recluse; but what I speak of her is upon sure grounds; you know 'tis something in my way of business to be a connoisseur in this kind of game.

Leander. What, Celia—

Mascaril. The very same; her modesty is nothing but downright grimace, but the shadow of virtue, which will never hold a siege, and which vanishes, as anybody may be convinced, before the rays emitted from a purse.

Leander. Heavens! What dost thou tell me? Shall I believe a discourse of this kind?

Mascaril. Sir, you are at liberty, what is it to me? No, pray don't believe me, pursue your design, take the sly jade, and marry her; the whole town, in a body, will return thanks for your public spirit; you marry the public good in her.

Leander. Strange surprise!

Mascaril. [Aside.] He has nibbled the hook. Courage, my brave lads, if he does but swallow it in good earnest, we shall draw a plaguy thorn out of our foot by this means.

Leander. Yes, this surprising account has thunderstruck me.

Mascaril. How! why could you?—

Leander. Go as far as the post-house, and see whether I have e'er a letter there, as I expect. [Alone, having mused a while.] Who would not have been deceived here? Never did the air of a face, if what he says be true, more impose upon the world.

SCENE III

Lelius, Leander.

Lelius. What may be the occasion of your looking so sad, sir?

Leander. Who, I?

Lelius. Yes, you yourself.

Leander. Suppose I have no occasion at all.

Lelius. I see well enough what it is, Celia is the cause of it.

Leander. My mind runs upon no such trifles.

Lelius. For all that, you had formed some notable plots to compass her. But you must say so, since they all miscarried.

Leander. Were I fool enough to be enamoured of her, I should despise all your finesse.

Lelius. What finesse, pray?

Leander. Lack-a-day, sir, we know all.

Lelius. All what?

Leander. Why, all your proceedings, from one end to t'other.

Lelius. This is all Hebrew to me, I can't comprehend one tittle of it.

Leander. Pretend, if you please, not to understand me, but take my word for once, be under no manner of apprehension about a possession, which I should be sorry so much as to dispute with you. I am for a beauty that has not been blown upon; I shall ne'er whine for one that has been upon the town.

Lelius. Softly, softly, Leander.

Leander. Hoh! What, you are in earnest? Go, I tell you once more, and sneak after her without jealousy, you may call yourself a most lucky fellow. 'Tis true, her beauty is none of the commonest, but to make amends for that, the rest is common enough.

Lelius. Leander, no more of this provoking language; oppose me as vigorously as you will to gain her, but, of all things, forbear those killing strokes at her reputation; please to know I tax myself with too much cowardice, but to hear this blasphemy against the object I adore; and it will ever go much less against me to bear your rivalry, than the least word that touches her character.

Leander. What I advance here comes from very good hands.

Lelius. Whoever told it you, is a scoundrel, and a rascal; there's not a person living can cast the least blemish upon this dear creature, I know her very heart.

Leander. But in short, Mascaril is a very competent judge in such a cause as this, 'twas he passed sentence upon her.

Lelius. He?

Leander. He himself.

Lelius. Does the insolent rascal pretend to scandalise a woman of honour, and think it possible too, I should make a laughing matter of it? A wager with you he eats his words.

Leander. Done, that he does not.

Lelius. 'Sdeath, I would cudgel him out of his life, should he dare to assert such lies to me.

Leander. And I would crop off his ears upon the spot, should he not stand to every syllable he has told me.

SCENE IV

Lelius, Leander, Mascaril.

Lelius. Oh! most lucky, there he is; come hither, ye cursed cur.

Mascaril. What's the matter?

Lelius. Thou tongue of the serpent, teeming with imposture, darest thou fasten thy poisonous teeth on Celia? and slander the most consummate virtue that ever adorned a state of poverty?

Mascaril. [Whispering *Lelius*.] Not so furious, this story was a contrivance of mine on set purpose.

Lelius. No, no, none of your winking, and none of your jokes; I am blind and deaf to all that can be said or done. Were it my own brother, he should pay dear for it; and to dare asperse what I adore, is wounding me in the most tender part. All those signs are made to no purpose; what was it you said to him?

Mascaril. Lord, sir, let's not pick a quarrel, or else I shall e'en walk off.

Lelius. You shan't stir a step.

Mascaril. Oh!

Lelius. Speak then, confess.

Mascaril. [Whispering *Lelius*.] Let me go, I tell you 'tis an artful stratagem.

Lelius. Be quick; what was't you said? Decide this dispute betwixt us.

Mascaril. I said what I said, pray don't put yourself in a passion.

Lelius. [Drawing his sword.] Ay? I shall make you express yourself in another manner.

Leander. [Stopping him.] Stay your hand a little, not quite so furious.

Mascaril. [Aside.] Was there ever in the world a creature so dull of understanding?

Lelius. Suffer me to discharge my just vengeance on him.

Leander. 'Tis assuming too much, to pretend to beat him in my presence.

Lelius. How! have I no right then to correct my own servants?

Leander. How, your servants?

Mascaril. [Aside.] What, not done yet! He'll discover all.

Lelius. Suppose I had a mind to thrash him to death, what then? He's my own servant.

Leander. At present he is mine.

Lelius. That's an admirable joke! And how yours, pray?

Leander. Beyond all dispute—

Mascaril. [Whispering.] Softly.

Lelius. Heh! What wouldst thou be at?

Mascaril. [Aside.] Oh! The confounded blockhead, to blow up my whole design! And not to comprehend anything either, whatever signs one makes to him!

Lelius. You've strange whims, Leander, and want to impose them upon me. Is not he my servant?

Leander. Hadn't you discharged him your service for some misdemeanour?

Lelius. I don't know what this means.

Leander. And did you not in the violence of your fury lay him over the shoulders most unmercifully?

Lelius. No such thing; I discharge him and cudgel him at that rate? You impose upon me, Leander, or he imposes upon you.

Mascaril. [Aside.] On, on, blunderbuss, you'll do your own business effectually.

Leander. [To *Mascaril*.] Then all this drubbing is purely imaginary?

Mascaril. He knows not what he says; his memory—

Leander. No, no, all these signs don't look well in thee; I suspect some crafty piece of artifice here; but for sake of the invention, go thy ways, I forgive thee. It's pretty sufficient for me, that he has undecieved me, so as to let me see for what reason thou hadst put this trick upon me; and that I come off so cheap, when I had trusted myself to thy hypocritical care. This ought to be called, "An advertisement to the reader." Adieu, Lelius, adieu, your most obedient servant.

SCENE V

Lelius, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Courage, my brave boy, our prowess ever attends us; let us draw, and bravely take the field; let us act *Olibrius, the Murderer of the Innocents*.

Lelius. He had accused thee of base reflections against—

Mascaril. And you could not let the artifice pass, leave him in his error, which made well for you, and which had pretty near weaned him of his love? No, truly, he has an open soul,

a stranger to dissimulation. With much ado, I had wormed myself dexterously into his rival's favour; this trick had near given me possession of his mistress; he balks me of her by false alarms; I try to abate the warmth of his rival's passion, whip comes in my giddy-brains, and sets him agog again. In vain did I make signs to him, and showed him 'twas all design. It signifies nothing, he pushes his point home, and never rests satisfied till he had unravelled the whole affair. Grand and sublime effort of invention, which yields to no man's living! 'Tis an exquisite piece, and worthy, in troth, to be made a present of to the king's cabinet!

Lelius. I'm not surprised that I baffle your expectations; if I'm not acquainted with the designs you are setting on foot, I shall make a hundred such mistakes.

Mascaril. So much the worse.

Lelius. At least, if you would be justly angry with me to some purpose, give me a little insight into your designs; but if I'm kept in the dark as to the spring of 'em, 'tis that's the reason why I am always caught napping.

Mascaril. Ay! there lies all the mischief, 'tis that which ruins us. In troth, my very worthy patron, I tell it you over and over, you'll never be otherwise than an ass whilst there's breath in you.

Lelius. Since the thing is done, let's think of it no more. My rival, however, will not have it in his power to disturb me, and provided thy endeavours which I absolutely rely upon—

Mascaril. Let us drop this discourse, and talk of something else. I'm not so easily pacified, not I; I am in too great a passion for that; you must, in the first place, do a good office for me, and we shall see afterwards whether I ought to undertake the management of your amours, or no.

Lelius. If that be all it sticks at, I refuse nothing. Tell me, hast thou need of my blood, or my sword?

Mascaril. What strange whims run in his head! You are just o' the humour of those friends of the blade, whom one always finds more ready to draw their sword than to produce a tester, when they should give it.

Lelius. What is it I can do for thee then?

Mascaril. Why, you must absolutely appease your father's anger.

Lelius. We have made a peace.

Mascaril. Yes, but not for me. I killed him this morning for your sake. The very fancy of it shocks him; and these

sort of feints are cruel strokes to such old fellows as he, which occasion the melancholy reflexion, much against their will, on the state their condition borders upon. The good sire, old as he is, loves life hugely, and can relish no joke upon that subject. He dreads the omen, and being enraged at me, they tell me he has entered an action against me. I'm afraid, if I am lodg'd at the expense of the king, that I may like it so well, after one quarter of an hour's acquaintance, that I shall hardly prevail on myself to quit the place ever after. There are a good many writs out against me, of pretty long standing; for in short, virtue is never without envy, and is always persecuted in this cursed age. Go then and prevail upon him.

Lelius. Yes, we shall bring him to temper; but you promise at the same time—

Mascaril. O! ay, we shall see. [Exit *Lelius.*] Now for a little breath after so much fatigue; let us stop, for a while, the career of our intrigues, and not plague ourselves as if we were haunted; Leander is incapacitated, at last, to hurt us; and an embargo laid upon Celia by the contrivance of—

SCENE VI

Ergastus, Mascaril.

Ergastus. I was looking for you, high and low, to do you a piece of service, by giving you information about a secret which greatly concerns you.

Mascaril. What may that be?

Ergastus. Have we no listeners about us?

Mascaril. None at all.

Ergastus. We are friends, as much as two people can be. I am acquainted with all thy projects, and with thy master's passion. Look sharp about you by and by. Leander has formed a party to carry off Celia, and I am informed that he has made a proper disposition of everything, and that he flatters himself he shall find admission into Trufaldin's house in masquerade, having understood that at this season the women of the neighbourhood very often pay visits, in the evening, masked.

Mascaril. Yes, a word to the wise; he's not yet in full possession, I may happen by and by to spring the game before him; and as to this thrust, I know how to give him the contretemps, by which I design he shall run himself upon my point. He's not aware of the singular gifts Heaven has enriched me with. Good-bye, we'll take a pint together at next meeting.

SCENE VII

Mascaril. [Alone.] We must, we must reap all the benefit to ourselves, from this amorous intrigue, that the thing will possibly admit of; and by a dexterous, uncommon turn, attempt the glory without the hazard. If I mask so as to get the start of him, Leander will certainly have no reason to triumph over us; and there, if we take the prize, before he comes up, he'll defray the charges of the expedition; because his project having already, in some measure, taken wind, the suspicion will always fall on his side: and we, being covered from the pursuit of the enemy, shall need give ourselves no concern as to the consequences of this dangerous attack. This it is to keep out of the scrape of ostentation, and hook out the chestnuts with the cat's paw. Now then for a masque with some of my choice comrades; to be beforehand with our gentry, we must have no loitering. I know where puss is squat, and can easily furnish myself with men and tackle, in the turn of a hand. Depend upon't I put my dexterity to its proper use. If Heaven has distributed to me my portion in knavery, I am none of your degenerate spirits who hide the talents they have received.

SCENE VIII

Lelius, Ergastus.

Lelius. He intends to carry her off in masquerade?

Ergastus. There is nothing more certain; one of the company having informed me of this design, I ran instantly to Mascaril, and told him all the affair, who is gone, as he said, to disappoint this party by some extempore stratagem; and as I have accidentally met you here, I thought it my duty to acquaint you with the whole.

Lelius. I'm exceedingly obliged to you for this news; go, I shan't forget this honest piece of service. [Exit *Ergastus.*] My droll rascal will certainly play 'em some trick or other: but I have a mind, on my part, to second his design. It shall never be said, that, in a business which so nearly concerns me, I should stir no more than a post. 'Tis about the time, they'll be surprised at sight of me. Pox! why did I not bring my musket with me? But come, and oppose me who dare, I've a case of good pistols, and my sword is true—So ho! within there; a word with you!

SCENE IX

Trufaldin (at his window), Lelius.

Trufaldin. What's the matter? Who's there?

Lelius. Fasten your doors carefully to-night.

Trufaldin. For what reason?

Lelius. There are certain sparks coming in masks, who design you an impertinent sort of serenade: they intend to carry off your Celia.

Trufaldin. Heavens!

Lelius. And they'll infallibly be here in a very short time: keep where you are, you may see the whole transaction from your window. Hey? What did I say? Don't you discern 'em already? Hist—you shall see me affront 'em; we shall have admirable sport, if our line don't break.

SCENE X

Lelius, Trufaldin, Mascaril, and his Company masked.

Trufaldin. Oh! the pleasant rogues that think to surprise me!

Lelius. You that are masked whither so fast? May one be let into the secret? Trufaldin, pray open to these gentry that they may have a mumming bout. [To Mascaril, disguised as a woman.] Lord, how exquisitely handsome she is! How genteel her air! How now! What! do you grumble! but without offence, may one remove the mask, and see that phiz o' yours?

Trufaldin. Hence, ye knaves, ye villains, be gone, ye raga-muffins—And you, sir, good night, and many thanks.

SCENE XI

Lelius, Mascaril.

Lelius. [Seeing Mascaril unmasked.] Mascaril, is it thee?

Mascaril. No, marry is it not, 'tis somebody else.

Lelius. Alas! what a shock is this! How hard is my fortune! Could I possibly guess this, having no notice of the private reasons which had disguised thee? Wretch that I am, unwittingly to play thee this trick, by prying too curiously under the mask! Now, have I as good a mind, in the just heat of my passion, to drub myself, or give myself a thousand lashes!

Mascaril. Adieu, most refined wit, unparalleled invention

Lelius. Unfortunate! If thy passion bereaves me of thy succour, what guardian angel can I invoke?

Mascaril. Why, Signor Belzebub.

Lelius. Ah! If thy heart is not insensible as brass, or steel, once more, at least, let my rash folly find a pardon; if to gain this boon 'tis necessary I should kiss thy feet; behold me—

Mascaril. Tol, lol, de rol. Come my boys, let's away. I hear some company who are just at our heels.

SCENE XII

Leander and his Company masked, Trufaldin at his window.

Leander. Softly there. Let us do nothing but in the gentlest manner.

Trufaldin. How's this! What, masks besieging my doors all night! Gentlemen, pray don't take cold in your pleasures; heads that are turned this way, have leisure enough without doubt. 'Tis something of the latest to take Celia along with you; excuse her for this night, she entreats you would. The dear girl is a-bed, and can't speak to you; I'm heartily sorry for you. But to refresh you under the great pains you are at for her sake, she presents you with this box of perfume.

Leander. Phogh! What a stink is here! I'm all besmared: we are discovered, let's draw off this way.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Lelius (disguised like an Armenian), Mascaril.

Mascaril. There you are bundled up after a most ridiculous fashion.

Lelius. Thou hast revived my dead hopes by this contrivance.

Mascaril. My passion's always too soon over; 'tis in vain to swear and make protestations, I can never stand to 'em

Lelius. In return, depend upon it, if I ever have it in my power, I'll be grateful to thy heart's content, and though I had but one morsel of bread—

Mascaril. Enough. Bend all your thoughts to the new design we have on foot; however if we catch you in any blunder, you can't lay the miscarriage upon surprise any more; your part in this play ought to be had perfectly by heart.

Lelius. But how did Trufaldin receive thee at his house?

Mascaril. I noosed the good sire with a pretended concern for him; I went with great earnestness to inform him, that unless he looked well about him there were people who would surprise him; that they took their aim, and from more than one quarter too, at her, of whose birth a preparatory letter had made a sham discovery; that they had a great mind to have drawn me in for a share in the business, but that I slipped my neck out of the collar; and that being touched with a most ardent affection for what so nearly concerned him, I came to forewarn him to stand upon his guard. Then, moralising, I made a solemn discourse upon the numbers of wicked people one sees every day here below; that, as for my part, being tired with the world, and the vile life I had lived in it, I was desirous to take some pains for the good of my soul, to retire from all hurry, and to be near some good man or other, with whom I might spin out my days in peace; that if he thought well of it, I should desire nothing more than to spend the rest of my life in his family; and that also he had gained upon my affections so far, that, without asking a farthing of wages to serve him, I would place in his hands, as knowing it to be safe there, some small matter my father had left me, and what I had got in service; of which, if it pleased Heaven to take me hence, I was fully determined to make him sole heir. This was the true way to come at his heart; and that your mistress and you might compare notes together, what course you are to take to bring your matters to bear, I was willing you should have a private interview; he himself has contrived to open me a way, which is pleasant enough, to bring you fairly and openly to her lodgings; happening to entertain me with an account of a son of his that's dead, and whom in a dream last night he saw come to life again. Upon this occasion you shall hear the story he told me, and upon which I've just now formed our stratagem.

Lelius. Enough, I know it all. Thou hast told it me twice already.

Mascaril. Yes, yes, but should I tell it thrice, it may happen still, that your wit, with all its sufficiency, may falter in some circumstance or other.

Lelius. But I put a force upon myself in deferring so long.

Mascaril. Poh! Pray, not quite so fast, for fear we should happen to trip. You've a noddle, do ye see, that's a little of the thickest: endeavour to be staunch in this same adventure. 'Tis a considerable time since Trufaldin left Naples, he then called himself Zanobio Ruberti. A certain party that raised a civil commotion, of which he was only suspected by the city, (in fact he's not a man to disturb any state) obliged him to leave the town by night without any bustle. A daughter of his very young, and his wife being left behind, he received the news some time after of their being both dead; and under this great affliction, being desirous to carry along with him to some other town not only his effects, but also the only hope left of his family, a young son of his, bred a scholar, whose name was Horace; he writ to Bologna, where, for his greater improvement, a certain tutor, named Albert, had the education of the youth. But though time and place were settled for their meeting, two whole years passed without seeing anything of 'em; insomuch that, after so long time believing them dead, he came to this city, where he took the name he now bears, without ever discovering the least tidings either of this Albert or his son Horace, for twelve long years. This then is the story in gross, only repeated over again, that you might be surer in the groundwork. Now, you're to be an Armenian merchant, who have seen them both safe and sound in Turkey. If I've trumped up this expedient of bringing 'em to life again, rather than any other, according to his dream, 'tis because in cases of adventures, it's the commonest thing in the world to see people taken at sea by some corsair of Turkey, and afterwards restored to their families in the very nick of time, after having been thought lost for fifteen or twenty years. For my part, I've seen a hundred of these kind of stories, let us make use of one of 'em, which will stand us in good stead, without racking our brains farther. You are to have heard the story of their being made slaves, and to have furnished 'em with money to redeem themselves; but having set out before them upon an urgent business, Horace gave you in charge to visit his father here, whose circumstances he had learnt, and with whom you were to stay a few days till their arrival. I've given you a long lesson here.

Lelius. These repetitions are superfluous. I comprehended the whole business at first sight.

Mascaril. I'll go to his house, and strike the first stroke.

Lelius. Harkee, Mascaril, there's only one point troubles me; suppose he should ask me to describe his son's person?

Mascaril. A pretty thing to puzzle about! Should you not know that he was very little when he saw him? And then besides, mayn't length of time and slavery have entirely altered him?

Lelius. 'Tis true. But pray, if he should remember he has seen me, what must I do then?

Mascaril. What, have you lost your memory? I told you, but just now, that (besides his only having a transient view of you could make no great impression, not having seen you above a minute) both your beard and your dress would disguise you infinitely.

Lelius. Very well. But, now I think of it; what part of Turkey?—

Mascaril. 'Tis equal I tell you, Turkey or Barbary.

Lelius. But the name of the town where I am to have seen him?

Mascaril. Tunis. He'll keep me all day, I think; repeating it so often is needless, says he, and yet I've repeated the town's name to him a dozen times already.

Lelius. Go, go, begin then. I want nothing more.

Mascaril. At least be cautious, and conduct yourself wisely. Let's have none of your inventions here.

Lelius. Let me alone for management. How suspicious thou art always!

Mascaril. Horace a student at Bologna, Trufaldin, Zanobio Ruberti a citizen of Naples. The tutor one Albert.—

Lelius. For shame, this is downright scandal upon me, to keep such a preaching to me; dost thou take me for a blockhead?

Mascaril. Not a finished one; but really something a little bordering upon it.

SCENE II

Lelius. [Alone.] When I've no occasion for him, he cringes like a spaniel; but now, because he very well knows what assistance he gives me, his familiarity grows thus absolutely licentious.—I am now going into the full sunshine of those bright eyes, whose power has imposed upon me so delightful a servitude. I'm now going, without hindrance, to paint in the most glowing colours the torments of my heart. I shall then know what doom—But here they are.

SCENE III

Trufaldin, Lelius, Mascalil.

Trufaldin. Thanks righteous Heaven! for this favourable turn of my fortune.

Mascalil. You are the man who should see visions, and dream dreams; since in you 'tis false that dreams are falsehoods.

Trufaldin. [To *Lelius.*] What thanks, what satisfaction shall I give you, sir? You, whom I ought to style the good angel of my happiness?

Lelius. This concern is needless, I freely discharge you.

Trufaldin. [To *Mascalil.*] I have seen somebody, I don't know where, something resembling this Armenian.

Mascalil. That's what I was saying; but one sees surprising likenesses sometimes.

Trufaldin. You have really seen this son of mine, this stay of my hope?

Lelius. Yes, Signor Trufaldin, one of the briskest men in the world.

Trufaldin. He gave you the history of his life, and spoke much about me?

Lelius. More than ten thousand times.

Mascalil. [Aside to *Lelius.*] Something less, I'm apt to believe.

Lelius. He described you, just as I see you; your face, your air—

Trufaldin. Was it possible, since the latest he could see me was at seven years old? And his tutor himself, after so long time, would have much ado to know my face?

Mascalil. One's own flesh and blood preserves this image in another guise; this likeness is imprinted in lines so strong, that my father—

Trufaldin. Enough.—Where was it you left him?

Lelius. In Turkey at Turin.

Trufaldin. Turin? But that town, I think, is in Piedmont.

Mascalil. [Aside.] Oh the numskull! [To *Trufaldin.*]— You don't understand him; he means Tunis; and it was in reality there he left your son. But the Armenians have all, through custom, a particular vicious pronunciation, harsh enough to us other nations; and that is, that in all their words they change a "nis" into a "rin"; and so instead of saying "Tunis," they pronounce "Turin."

Trufaldin. It was necessary to be let into this, to understand him.—What way did he direct you to meet with his father!

Mascaril. [Aside.] See if the oaf has one word to answer! [To *Trufaldin*, after pretending to fence.] I was just practising a lesson at small sword; formerly there was not a man in Christendom could match me at that diversion; and I've played a foil in many and many a fencing-school.

Trufaldin. [To *Mascaril*.] That's not the thing I want to know at present.—[To *Lelius*.] What other name did he say I might have?

Mascaril. Ah! Signor Zanobio Ruberti, what joy is that which Heaven has now sent you!

Lelius. That's your true name; the other is borrowed.

Trufaldin. But where did he tell you that he first saw the light?

Mascaril. Naples seems a most agreeable place of abode; but for your part, it ought to be your utter aversion.

Trufaldin. Canst thou not hold thy prattling, and let us go on with our discourse?

Lelius. Naples is the place where he first began his course.

Trufaldin. Where did I send him in his infancy? and under whose tuition?

Mascaril. That poor Albert deserves highly of you, for having accompanied your son from Bologna, to whose discretion your fatherly care had committed him.

Trufaldin. Pshaw!—

Mascaril. [Aside.] We are undone if this conversation lasts long.

Trufaldin. I would be glad to be informed concerning their adventure. Aboard what vessel providence, which ordered things so happily—

Mascaril. I don't know what's the matter, I do nothing but yawn. But Signor Trufaldin, do you consider that, probably, this gentleman stranger may want some refreshment? and it's late too?

Lelius. No refreshment for me.

Mascaril. Oh! sir, you're more hungry than you imagine.

Trufaldin. Please to walk in then.

Lelius. After you.

Mascaril. [To *Trufaldin*.] Sir, in Armenia the masters of the house use no ceremony. [To *Lelius*, after *Trufaldin* is gone into the house.] You poor mortal, what not two words?

Lelius. He surprised me, just at first; but ben't any longer

concerned, I have rallied my spirits, and am going to rattle away boldly.—

Mascaril. Here comes our rival, who knows nothing of our plot.
[They go into Trufaldin's house.]

SCENE IV

Anselm, Leander.

Anselm. Stay, Leander, and suffer a discourse, which aims at nothing but your peace and reputation for life. I speak not as the father of my daughter, as a man interested for my own family; but as your own father, solicitous for your welfare, without a design of flattering, or imposing upon you in anything; in short, with an open and honest heart, as I would everyone should deal with my own flesh and blood, in the like case. Are you sensible with what eye everybody regards this amour of yours, which, in one night's time, has been blazed all about town? To what tittle-tattle, and sneers your last night's adventure has been everywhere exposed? What judgment people form of that capricious choice, which, say they, has pitched upon a person here for a wife, who is the scum of Egypt, a strolling wench, whose noble employment is only the trade of a beggar? I really blushed for you, even more than I did for myself, who find myself involved here in this scandalous uproar; myself, I say, whose daughter, being promised you in marriage, cannot bear a slight upon her, without being affronted at it. For shame, Leander, quit these mean-spirited ways; open your eyes a little; if none of us are wise at all times, yet the shortest errors are always the best. When a man has no portion with his wife, but beauty only, repentance is at the heels of wedlock; and the handsomest woman in the world has little defence against the indifference which succeeds enjoyment. I tell it you once more, these fervent transports, youthful ardours, and ecstasies, may furnish us out a few agreeable nights at first; but this bliss is by no means lasting, and, our passion abating its speed after luscious nights, gives us but nauseous days; then succeed cares, anxieties, miseries, sons disinherited by the resentment of fathers.

Leander. Through your whole discourse, I've heard not a word which my own mind has not represented to me already. I know how much I'm indebted for the great honour you design me, and of which I am not worthy; and see, in spite of all

opposition my passion may give me, how great your daughter's worth and virtue is; nay, I'm resolved too to endeavour—

Anselm. Somebody opens this door, let's retire to some distance, for fear some secret poison proceed from it, that may seize you unawares.

SCENE V

Lelius, Mascaril.

Mascaril. We shall presently see a shipwreck of our knavery, if you persist in these palpable blunders.

Lelius. Am I eternally to hear these reprimands of thine? What canst thou complain of? Have I not succeeded in everything I said since—

Mascaril. So, so. Witness the Turks, whom you called heretics, and who, you affirmed, on your corporal oath, worshipped the sun and moon for their gods. Let that pass. What frets me beyond measure is, that your love, when with Celia, makes you strangely forget yourself; 'tis just like boiling pap, which, by too fierce a fire, swells, mounts up to the brim, and runs over all around.

Lelius. Could one force one's self to a more thorough reserve? I hardly spoke to her afterwards.

Mascaril. Right; but it's not enough, not to speak; by your gestures, during the short time of supper, you gave greater reason for suspicion than other people would have done in a whole twelve-month.

Lelius. And how so?

Mascaril. How so? everybody might see it. At table, where Trufaldin would force her to sit down, you never kept your eyes off her, blushed, were out of countenance, looked babies in her eyes without minding what people helped you to; you were never thirsty but when she drank; and greedily seizing the glass whilst in her hands, without rinsing it, or throwing a drop of it away, you drank her leavings, and seemed to affect that side of the glass which she had carried to her lips; you laid your paw as quick upon every morsel of bread her fine hand had touched, or her teeth indented, as a cat would do upon a mouse, and swallowed 'em as glib, as a man would do green peas. Then, besides all this, you made an intolerable noise of tic-tac, with your feet under the table, with which Trufaldin happening to have two kicks, something of the hardest, twice punished two innocent curs, who would have snarled at you, if they durst;

and then, after this, was your behaviour decent? For my part, my body was upon the rack; notwithstanding the cold season, I worked till I sweat again; I hung over you just as a bowler does over his bowl, after he has delivered it, and thought to give you a rub, by a thousand distortions of my body.

Lelius. Lack-a-day, how easy it is to condemn things, of which you don't feel the enchanting cause! I've a good mind, nevertheless, (once to humour thee) to put a force upon that love, which, at other times, I must obey. Henceforward—

SCENE VI

Lelius, Mascaril, Trufaldin.

Mascaril. We were just talking over the variety of Horace's fortune.

Trufaldin. [To *Lelius.*] 'Twas kindly done. In the meantime, will you grant me the favour of only one word with him there in private?

Lelius. I must be very inconsiderate if I should not.

[*Lelius goes into Trufaldin's house.*

SCENE VII

Trufaldin, Mascaril.

Trufaldin. Harkee, dost thou know what I have just been doing?

Mascaril. No; but certainly, if you think proper, I shan't remain long in ignorance.

Trufaldin. From a large sturdy oak, of near two hundred years' standing, I have now cut off an admirable branch, culled out for the purpose, of a reasonable thickness; of which with great eagerness, upon the spot, I made a cudgel, near upon— Yes, full of this largeness, [Showing his arm.] a little taper towards one end; but, as I take it, worth a hundred saplings, to belabour the shoulders withal; for it's well poised, green, knotty, and massy.

Mascaril. But for whom, I beseech you, all this preparation?

Trufaldin. For thyself, first of all; then, secondly, for that pious missioner who would palm one person upon me, and trick me out of another; for this Armenian, this merchant in disguise, introduced with the bait of a counterfeit story.

Mascaril. How! Don't you believe?—

Trufaldin. Don't cast about for an excuse, he himself, by good luck, discovered his own cheat, in telling Celia, whilst he squeezed her hand at the same time, that 'twas for her sake alone he came disguised in this manner. He didn't mind my little god-daughter Jenny, who heard all word for word. I make no doubt on't, though he happened not to mention it, but thou art the cursed accomplice in all this.

Mascaril. Indeed, you do me wrong. If you are really abused, believe me, he imposed first upon me with this story.

Trufaldin. Would you convince me you speak truth? Second my blows, and drive him away; let's give it the rascal back-stroke and fore-stroke, thenceforward I quit thee of all share in the crime.

Mascaril. Ay, ay, with all my soul, I'll dust his jacket for him purely; and by that you shall see I've had no hand in this matter. [Aside.] Ah! Monsieur Armenian, you shall have a drubbing-bout, for a mar-all, as you always are.

SCENE VIII

Lelius, Trufaldin, Mascaril.

Trufaldin. [To *Lelius*, after having knocked at his door.] A word with you, pray. So, Mr. Bite, you've the assurance now to dupe an honest gentleman, and make your game of him, heh?

Mascaril. To pretend to have seen his son in another country, only to get more easy admittance into his family!

Trufaldin. [Beating *Lelius*.] I'll pay you, I'll be even with you presently.

Lelius. [To *Mascaril*, who beats him likewise.] Oh! the scoundrel!

Mascaril. It's thus your cheats—

Lelius. Villain!

Mascaril. Are served here. Keep that for my sake.

Lelius. How then! Am I a gentleman?—

Mascaril. [Beating him, and driving him off.] March off, be gone, I tell you, or I shall beat your brains out.

Trufaldin. This pleases me to the life, come in, I'm thoroughly satisfied. [Mascaril follows Trufaldin into his house.]

Lelius. [Returning.] This to me! This glaring affront by a servant! Could one have thought the traitor would have behaved thus, to proceed thus insolently to abuse his master?

Mascaril. [From Trufaldin's window.] May one ask, without offence, how fare your shoulders?

Lelius. What! Hast thou the impudence to prate to me still in that manner?

Mascaril. See then, see what it is not to mind little Jenny, and to have a babbling tongue always, without discretion; but this time I'm not angry with you, I've done scolding and swearing at you; though the folly of the action is complete, yet my hand has expiated the fault upon your shoulders.

Lelius. Hah! I'm determined to take vengeance for this undutiful assault.

Mascaril. You yourself have brought all this mischief upon your own head.

Lelius. I?

Mascaril. Had you not been a shallow-brain, when you were talking heedlessly to your idol, you would have perceived Jenny at your heels, whose quickness of hearing discovered the whole affair.

Lelius. Could anybody possibly catch one word I spoke to Celia?

Mascaril. And whence else could proceed this kicking you out o' doors all of a sudden? Yes, you're shut out by your own tittle-tattle. I don't know whether you play often at picquet, but you've an admirable knack at discarding.

Lelius. Oh! most unfortunate of all wretches! But why again must I be turned out by thee?

Mascaril. I never did better than in taking that task upon me; by this means, at least, I prevent all suspicion of being author, or accomplice, in this piece of artifice.

Lelius. You should therefore, for your share, have laid me on more gently.

Mascaril. What an ass! Why, Trufaldin leered at us most narrowly. And then I must tell you, under this pretence of serving you, I was not at all displeased to vent my spleen; in short, the thing is over, and if I have your word that you will never pretend, directly or indirectly, to revenge those blows over the scut, which I gave you home with so hearty a goodwill, then do I covenant with you, by the assistance of the post I am in, to complete your wishes, before two nights more pass over your head.

Lelius. Though thy treatment of me was the most shocking, yet what would not such a promise prevail upon me to do?

Mascaril. You promise it then?

Lelius. Yes, I do promise it.

Mascaril. But this is not all yet. Promise that you will never meddle or make with anything I take in hand.

Lelius. 'Tis done.

Mascaril. If you are tardy, may a quartan ague—

Lelius. But be as good as thy word with me, and contrive how to make me easy.

Mascaril. Go throw off your habit, and 'noint your back a little.

Lelius. [Alone.] Must that ill-fortune, which is ever at my heels, always present me with disgrace upon disgrace?

Mascaril. [Coming out of Trufaldin's house.] What? Not gone yet? Hence immediately; but, of all things, take special care not to take any care at all, since I'm o' your side, let that satisfy you; don't stir a foot by the way of helping me forward; be at quiet.

Lelius. [Going.] Yes, yes; about my business; I'll stick to that.

Mascaril. [Alone.] Now let me see what course I am to steer.

SCENE IX

Ergastus, Mascaril.

Ergastus. Mascaril, I come to tell thee a piece of news, which will give a cruel blow to thy projects; at this instant that I am talking to thee, a young gipsy, who nevertheless is no black, and appears much like a gentleman, is arrived with a very pale-faced old woman, and is to call upon Trufaldin to repurchase the slave you'd a fancy for. He seems to be very eager for her.

Mascaril. Doubtless, 'tis the lover Celia spoke of. Were ever people's fortunes so embroiled as ours are? No sooner clear of one encumbrance, but we fall into another. In vain do we learn that Leander is upon the point of quitting the cause, and giving us no farther trouble; that his father being arrived, has, contrary to expectation, turned the balance on the side of Hippolyta. That he has made a thorough change of affairs by his authority; and is going, this very day, to finish the marriage treaty; when one rival withdraws, another more plaguy one comes, to deprive us of all our poor remains of hope. Nevertheless, by a surprising cast of my art, I believe I shall be able to stop their journey for a while, and gain as much time,

as will be necessary to attempt the finishing stroke to this famous affair. A great robbery has been lately committed, by whom, nobody knows. These sort o' people are seldom reckoned so honest as they should be; I'll dexterously procure the droll's imprisonment for a few days, upon a frivolous suspicion. I know some gripping officers of justice, who are always deliberately prepared for such jobs as these, with the greedy hope of some small present; there's nothing, in their way, that they won't attempt blindfold; be the person ever so innocent, the purse is always, for their profit, a criminal, and must pay the piper.

ACT V

SCENE I

Mascaril, Ergastus.

Mascaril. A stupid cur! a cur of all curs! Sap-headed beast! Must we be eternally persecuted by you?

Ergastus. By the great care of the constable everything went smoothly. The wag was just cooped, had not your master himself, come in upon 'em that very instant, like a madman as he was, and utterly spoiled thy plot. I can't bear it, cries he, with a blustering air, that an honest gentleman should be dragged away in this disgraceful manner; I answer for him, from his very looks, and will be his bail. And as they made some resistance rather than let go their man, presently he charged the myrmidons, who are a sort of people much afraid of their carcases, so vigorously, that, even at this very time, they're a scampering, and every man thinks he has got a Lelius at his heels.

Mascaril. The booby don't dream now that this gipsy is already got there to Trufaldin's house, to carry off his treasure.

Ergastus. Good-bye, a certain business obliges me to leave thee.

SCENE II

Mascaril. [Alone.] Yes; this last monstrous accident has absolutely stunned me. One would think, and for my part, I'm clear in the matter, that this pragmatical devil, with which he's possessed, delights to insult me, and hurries me this spark

into every place where his presence can do mischief. Yet for all this, I'm determined to see it out, and, spite of all these strokes try who shall carry the day, this demon, or myself. Celia has something of a fellow-feeling with us, and looks upon her departure with great regret. I must endeavour to make my ends of this: but here they come; now for the execution. This well-furnished house here is at my beck, I can dispose of it with great freedom; if fortune say the word, all will go well; nobody but myself governs there, and I keep the key. Strange! what a number of adventures have we seen in a little time! and what variety of shapes is a sharper obliged to take!

SCENE III

Celia, Ander.

Ander. You know, Celia, there is nothing my heart has left undone, to prove the excess of its passion. When I was but very young, my courage in the wars gained me considerable esteem amongst the Venetians, and I might, one time or other, without flattering myself, have pretended to some employment of distinction, by continuing in the service: when lo, I forgot everything for your sake, and the direct consequence of a disguise in dress, which followed the sudden change you made in my heart, was to prevail upon your lover to join himself to your gang; nor has it been in the power of a thousand accidents, or even of your indifference, to break that inseparable attachment, which makes me for ever yours: since that, being, by an accident, parted from you for a much longer season than I could have foreseen, I've lost no time, and spared no pains to join you again: in short, having found out the old gipsy woman, and, full of impatience, made myself acquainted with your birth, that for a certain sum, which was then of great service to them, and which prevented the ruin of your whole band, you were left as a pledge in these parts; I fly hither immediately to break these chains of servitude, and to receive from you whatever commands you are pleased to give: and here at the same time, I find you pensive and melancholy, when your eyes ought to have sparkled with joy; if a retreat has anything in it can allure you, I have sufficient at Venice, of the spoils taken in war, for us both to live on there: but if I must still follow you as before, you've my consent, and my heart shall have no ambition, but to be near you in whatever quality you please.

Celia. Your great affection for me discovers itself most clearly: to appear concerned as it were to be ungrateful: and besides, the disturbance in my countenance does by no means speak the sense of my heart on this occasion. A violent headache has much ruffled it, and if I had the least influence upon you, our voyage should be suspended, at least three or four days, till this indisposition had taken another turn.

Ander. Defer it as long as you think fit, every intention of mine is entirely bent to please you. Let us see for a house where you may live at ease. Hoh! here's a bill offers itself most apropos.

SCENE IV

Celia, Ander, Mascaril (disguised like a Swiss).

Ander. Monsieur Swiss, are you master of this house?

Mascaril. Me be, at your serfice.

Ander. May we lodge here, pray?

Mascaril. Yes, me have de very good shambers, ready furnish for stranger, but me no loge de people scandaluse.

Ander. I believe your house is clear of all suspicion.

Mascaril. Me see by your face, you be one stranger in this town.

Ander. I am so.

Mascaril. Matame be shee married to Monsieu?

Ander. Sir?

Mascaril. Be she your wife, or your sister?

Ander. Neither.

Mascaril. Ma foy, she be very pritty; you come for mershandise, or perhaps for sue in de court of shustice for your own. Lawsuit be one very bad ting, it come so dear; de solicitor de tief, and de counsellor de rogue.

Ander. 'Tis not for that, neither.

Mascaril. You bring dis lady den for come take de walk, and for see de city?

Ander. [To *Celia.*] No matter what. I'll be with you again in a moment; I'll go fetch the old gentlewoman presently; and countermand our baggage which was ready.

Mascaril. Matame, be she not vel?

Ander. She has got the headache.

Mascaril. Me have de very good vine, and de good cheese; walk in, walk in, to my litel ouse.

[*Celia, Ander and Mascaril go into the house.*

SCENE V

Lelius. [Alone.] How eager soever my impatient heart may be; my word obliges me to rest in expectation; to let another work for me, and see, without daring to stir, how Heaven will dispose of my destiny.

SCENE VI

Ander, Lelius.

Lelius. [To *Ander*, coming out of the house.] Were you inquiring for anybody in this dwelling?

Ander. 'Tis a ready furnished lodging, which I have hired but just now.

Lelius. The house for all that belongs to my father, and my servant lies there o' nights to guard it.

Ander. I know nothing of that; the bill, at least, shows 'tis to be let.—Read it.

Lelius. Very true, this surprises me, I confess. Who the deuce could put it there? and to what purpose?—Hoh! faith, I guess, pretty near, what it means: this can't possibly proceed from any other quarter than what I conjecture.

Ander. May one be so bold to ask, what affair this may be?

Lelius. I should make a great secret of it to anybody else; but for you, it can be of no consequence, and you will be cautious how you speak of it. Without doubt, the bill you see there, as far as I can guess, at least, can't be otherwise than an invention of the servant I am speaking of; nothing but an intricate knot, which should be of his knitting, to give me possession of a certain young gipsy, with whom I am smitten, and must gain her. I've missed of her hitherto, though I have made several pushes at her.

Ander. Her name is?—

Lelius. Celia.

Ander. Hoh! why did you not say so? You'd nothing to do but speak out; without dispute I should ha' saved you all the trouble this project might cost you.

Lelius. How so? Do you know her?

Ander. 'Tis I who have just now redeemed her.

Lelius. You surprise me!

Ander. Her health not admitting of our leaving this place, I had just placed her in the lodgings you see; and I am exceedingly glad on this occasion, that you have let me into your design.

Lelius. How! Shall I obtain the happiness I hope for, by your means? Could you—

Ander. [Going to knock at the door.] You shall be satisfied of that in an instant.

Lelius. What can I say to you? And what thanks—

Ander. No, give me none, I'll have none.

SCENE VII

Lelius, Ander, Mascaril.

Mascaril. [Aside.] Soh! don't I see there my hair-brains of a master? He'll play us some new trick again will undo us.

Lelius. In this grotesque dress who could have known him? Come hither, Mascaril, you're welcome.

Mascaril. Me be a man of honour, me no Masqueril, me never debauch one wife one dâter.

Lelius. The droll gibberish! 'Tis admirable in troth!

Mascaril. You go about your business, and no make your laf o' me.

Lelius. Go, go, away with your mask, and know your master.

Mascaril. Begar, me never no conoissance o' you.

Lelius. All matters are accommodated, disguise thyself no longer.

Mascaril. If you no marsh off, me give you one gran slap o' de shops.

Lelius. Thy Swiss jargon is needless, I tell thee, for we are agreed, and his generosity obliges me. I have everything my heart could wish, and there's no reason for thee to be under any farther apprehensions.

Mascaril. If you are agreed, by great good luck, I then un-Swiss myself and return to myself again.

Ander. This valet o' yours served you with much zeal; please to stay a little, I'll return to you presently.

SCENE VIII

Lelius, Mascaril

Lelius. How now, Mascaril, what hast thou to say next?

Mascaril. That I'm in raptures to see our labours attended with good success.

Lelius. You made great scruple, truly, of quitting your disguise, and could hardly credit me in this event.

Mascaril. As I knew you pretty well, I had some terrors upon me; and must still own the adventure is surprising enough.

Lelius. But confess, however, that I have done great things at the upshot; at least I've made amends for my miscarriages by this masterpiece, and I shall have this honour, to give the finishing stroke to the work.

Mascaril. Let it be so, you'll be much more lucky, than wise.

SCENE IX

Celia, Ander, Lelius, Mascaril.

Ander. Is not this the beloved person you were speaking of to me?

Lelius. Heavens! What happiness can be equal to mine!

Ander. 'Tis very true, I am greatly indebted to you for the favour you've done me, did not I acknowledge it, I should be much to blame. But in short, the favour would be hardly earned, were I to repay it at the price of my heart. Judge in the transports her beauty gives me, whether I ought to discharge my debt at such an expense; you are generous yourself, yet you would not do the like. Farewell. For a few days, let us return from whence we came.

SCENE X

Lelius, Mascaril.

Mascaril. [After singing some time.] I sing, and at the same time I have little inclination to't. You are admirably agreed, he gives ye up Celia. Hem! you understand me, sir.

Lelius. 'Tis too much, I am determined to ask no more assistance, since 'tis thrown away upon me; I'm a puppy, a traitor, a detestable blockhead, not worthy anybody's care, utterly incapable of business. Go, cease attempting anything for an ill-contrived mortal, who won't suffer any person to make him happy; after so many misfortunes, and so much folly, death should be the only assistant left me.

SCENE XI

Mascaril. [Alone.] There he hit the true way of making his fortune for good and all; there wants nothing, in short, but the single folly of dying, to crown all the rest. But in vain does his indignation against his sins committed, urge him to dis-

charge me from all care, or attempts to support him; I'm resolved, be he what he will, to help him in spite of him, and vanquish the very de'el that's in him. Greater the opposition, greater the glory; and difficulties are but a kind of tire-woman, who deck and adorn virtue.

SCENE XII

Celia, Mascaril.

Celia. [To *Mascaril*, who had been whispering to her.] Say what you will, and propose what one can, I expect very little from these delays; the success we have seen hitherto, may sufficiently convince one, that they are not as yet in any likelihood of coming to agreement. And I have told you already that a heart formed as mine is, will not for the sake of one do injustice to another; and that I find myself strongly attached, by different ties, to both parties; if Lelius has love and riches on his side, Ander has gratitude for his share, which will not permit me even in the most secret thought, ever to consult anything against his interests. Yes, if he has no more a place in my soul, if the gift of my heart must not crown his love, at least I owe this reward to what he has done for me, not to choose another in contempt of his constancy; and that I should offer the same violence to my own inclinations, as I do to his, of which he has given the strongest evidence. Upon these difficulties which my duty throws in my way, judge what thou art to allow thyself to hope for.

Mascaril. To say the truth, these are ugly sort of rubs in our way, and I have not the knack of working miracles; but I'll go employ my utmost efforts, leave no stone unturned, put the thing in all possible lights, and try to find out some wholesome expedient; I shall tell you presently what's to be done in this matter.

SCENE XIII

Hippolyta, Celia.

Hippolyta. Ever since you've been among us, the ladies here may complain, very justly, of the robberies committed by your eyes; since you deprive 'em of their darling conquests, and make traitors of their lovers. There's not a heart can escape the darts with which you've the art of striking people

at first sight; the liberties of thousands offering themselves to your chains, seem to enrich you daily at our expense. As to myself however, I should make no complaints of the tyranny of your superior charms, if, when you have gained both my lovers, one of them had but given me consolation for the loss of the other; but thus inhumanly to bereave me of 'em both, are hard lines, of which I take the liberty to complain to you.

Celia. Madam, you rally with a good grace, but have a little mercy, I beseech you, on your humble servant. Those eyes, those very eyes of yours, know their own power too well, to apprehend anything from what I'm able to do; they are too conscious of their own charms, to take alarm at such trifles.

Hippolyta. And yet I have advanced nothing in what I've said, which has not already happened in every heart; and, without naming the rest, 'tis well known that Celia has made deep impressions both upon Leander and Lelius.

Celia. I believe you'll find no great difficulty to make yourself easy at the loss of persons who've made such a blind mistake, and will find a lover not worth your valuing, who is capable of making so ill a choice.

Hippolyta. On the contrary, I act with a quite different air; I find so great merit in your beauty, and see so many reasons sufficient to excuse the inconstancy of those who are insensibly won by it, that I can't blame that change of passion, by which Leander has broken the vows he made me; and I am just going, without hatred or fury, to see him recalled to his obedience by the authority of a father.

SCENE XIV

Celia, Hippolyta, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Great, great news! and surprising success that I am now going to tell you!

Celia. What is it then?

Mascaril. Harkee, you have here without flattery—

Celia. What?

Mascaril. The winding up of a true and genuine comedy; the old gipsy-woman, but this very moment—

Celia. Well?

Mascaril. Was crossing the square, thinking no harm, when another haggard old woman poring in her face a long while, at nose-length, by the hoarse noise of Billingsgate gave the

signal for a furious combat: who instead of arms, musket, dagger, and spear, only brandished in the air four withered talons, with which these two combatants laboured their utmost to tear off the little flesh time had left on their bones. Not a word could one hear, but bitch, whore, and dirty drab. Off fly the quoifs immediately, which leaving a couple of bald-pates naked to view, rendered the battle ridiculously horrible. At the noise of the hubbub, Ander and Trufaldin, as a power of other people did, running to see what was the matter, had enough to do to part 'em; so furiously were they driven on by passion; in the meantime each of 'em, when the storm was abated, strove to hide the disgrace of her head; and everybody wanted to know who began this whimsical fray; she who had first raised the alarm, notwithstanding the heat of passion she was in, having fixed her eyes a considerable time upon Trufaldin; 'Tis you, cries she, with a loud voice, if some delusion does not cheat my sight, who, I was informed, lived in these parts incognito; most happy meeting! Yes, Zanobio Ruberti, by good luck I've found you out in the very instant when I was giving myself so much torment for your sake. When you left your family at Naples, I had, you know, your daughter in my keeping, whom I brought up during her infancy, and who discovered, at four years of age, a gracefulness and charming behaviour, by a thousand little actions. She whom you see there, that infamous hag, making herself very familiar in my family, stole away that treasure from me. Your lady, alas, as I have reason to believe, gave way to such an excess of grief at this affliction, that it helped to shorten her days; so that this little daughter stole out of my custody, made me dread your severe reproaches, and order it should be given out to you that they were both dead; but 'tis necessary now I have found her out that she discover what is become of her. At the name of Zanobio Ruberti, which she repeated several times throughout the story, Ander having changed countenance for some time, addressed himself to the surprised Trufaldin in these words: What then! has Heaven most happily directed me to find him whom I have hitherto sought in vain, and could I behold the source of my blood, the author of my being, and yet not know him again! Yes, my father, I am Horace, your son. Alberti my tutor having ended his days, and perceiving several other inquietudes growing upon me, I left Bologna, and quitting my studies, wandered about for six years, through different places, just as the strength of curiosity moved me. Nevertheless, after

this, a secret instinct prompted me to revisit my kindred and my country: but at Naples, alas! I could no more find you, nor know what was become of you, but by confused reports; so that having lost my labour in search of you, Venice for a while put a stop to my fruitless roving; and from that time to this I have lived without having the least light into my family, any farther than knowing the name. I leave you to judge whether Trufaldin was not more than ordinary transported all this while; in a word, to cut the matter short, which you'll have the opportunity of informing yourselves about more at leisure, from the confession of your old gipsy-woman, Trufaldin owns you now for his daughter; Ander is your brother; and as he can no longer think of enjoying his sister, an obligation he is pleased to own, has prevailed with him to gain the point of your marriage with my young master, whose father being a witness of the whole transaction, gives his full consent to this match; and to complete the joy of his family, he has proposed his daughter to the new-found Horace. Here are a number of incidents for you at one birth!

Celia. So many novelties perfectly astonish me.

Mascaril. The whole company is at my heels, except the two she-champions, who are still refreshing themselves after the fatigue of battle. Leander is among 'em, as is also your father. I'll go inform my master of this, and tell him that when matters were looked upon as strongest against him, Heaven has almost wrought a miracle in his favour. [Exit Mascaril.]

Hippolyta. The joy of this overwhelms me so, that were it my own case, I could not be more delighted. But here they come.

SCENE XV

Trufaldin, Anselm, Pandolph, Celia, Hippolyta, Leander, Ander.

Trufaldin. My child!

Celia. My father!

Trufaldin. Dost thou know how much Heaven has blessed us?

Celia. I've just been informed here of the wonderful adventure.

Hippolyta. [To Leander.] 'Twould be in vain to make speeches in excuse for your passion, when I have before my eyes all you can say.

Leander. I desire only a generous pardon; and protest to Heaven, that in this sudden return, my father hath little influence in comparison with my own inclination.

Ander. [To Celia.] Who would ever have believed that so

chaste a love could one day be condemned by nature? However, 'twas regulated by so much honour, that with a small variation I may still retain it.

Celia. For my part, I blamed myself, and thought I committed a fault in having no more than a very high esteem for you; I could not comprehend what powerful let stopped me in a path so pleasant and so slippery; and diverted my heart from the approbation of a flame, which my senses made so strong efforts to introduce into my soul.

Trufaldin. [To *Celia*.] But now I have found thee, what will my child say of me, if I am thinking immediately to part with thee, and engage thee in the laws of wedlock to this gentleman's son?

Celia. Only that my destiny now depends on you.

SCENE XVI

Trufaldin, Anselm, Pandolph, Celia, Hippolyta, Lelius, Leander, Ander, Mascaril.

Mascaril. [To *Lelius*.] Now let's see whether this devil o' yours will be able this bout to defeat a hope so solid; and whether your fruitful invention will again arm itself against this excess of good luck that's come to us? By a most unexpected favourable turn of fortune, your desires are crowned, and *Celia* is yours.

Lelius. Am I to believe that the absolute power of Heaven?

Trufaldin. Yes; my son, 'tis really so.

Pandolph. The matter is determined.

Ander. [To *Lelius*.] By this I have acquitted myself of what I owe you.

Lelius. [To *Mascaril*.] I must embrace thee a thousand, and a thousand times, in this excess of joy—

Mascaril. Oh! oh! Gently, I beseech you; he has almost stifled me. I'm terribly afraid for *Celia*, if you clasp her with so much eagerness: one would be glad to excuse such embraces.

Trufaldin. [To *Lelius*.] You know the happiness with which Heaven has blest me in particular; but since one and the same day has given joy to us all, let us not part till 'tis ended, and let *Leander's* father also be sent for immediately.

Mascaril. Here, are you all provided for: and is there ne'er a snug wench, that may accommodate poor *Mascaril*? It gives

me too a strange itch to matrimony, to see every Jack have
his Jill.

Anselm. I've one will do thy business exactly.

Mascaril. Come on, my brave boys, and may Heav'n think
fitting,

To send us sweet babes of our proper begetting.

THE AMOROUS QUARREL
(A COMEDY)

**THE AMOROUS QUARREL, a Comedy in Verse of Five Acts, acted at
Paris at the Theatre of Little Bourbon, in the month of December,
1658.**

The incidents of *The Amorous Quarrel* are ranged with a great deal of art, though altogether in the Spanish taste; too complicated in the working and little verisimilitude in the unravelling. However there is a source of the true comic in the painting of the characters. The fathers, lovers, mistresses, valets, all are mutually ignorant of the particular views by which each is agitated, and by turns bring each other into a labyrinth of errors, from which they can't disengage themselves. The conversation of Valere with Ascanius in man's clothes, that of the two old men who reciprocally ask pardon of each other without daring to discover the cause of their uneasiness, the situation of Lucilia accused in the presence of her father, and the stratagem of Erastus to get the truth from his servant, are passages equally pleasant and ingenious. But the eclaircissement between the same Erastus and Lucilia, which gave the title of *The Amorous Quarrel* to the piece, their falling out and reconciliation, are the most justly admired parts of this performance.

ACTORS

ALBERTO, *father to Ascanius and Lucilia.*

POLIDOR, *father to Valere.*

LUCILIA, *daughter to Alberto.*

ASCANIUS, *Alberto's daughter, in man's habit.*

ERASTUS, *in love with Lucilia.*

VALERE, *son to Polidor.*

MARINETTA, *maid to Lucilia.*

FROSINA, *confidant to Ascanius.*

METAPHRASTUS, *a pedant.*

GROS-RENARD, *servant to Erastus.*

MASCARIL, *servant to Valere.*

RAPIERE, *a bully.*

SCENE: Paris.

ACT I

SCENE I

Erastus, Gros-Renard.

Erastus. Wouldest thou have me tell thee? Why, I have a secret malady then which never leaves my mind at true ease. Yes, though you may make a jest of my love, to say the truth, I'm afraid of its being injured; that thy fidelity may be corrupted in favour of a rival, or at least that thou mayest be deceived as well as I.

Gros-Renard. For my part I must needs say, no offence to your honour's love, that to suspect me of any knavish cast, is to wound my integrity very unjustly, and to show little skill in physiognomy. People of my bulk are seldom accused, thank Heaven, of being either knaves or plotters. Neither do I belie that honour which is done us but am a round man in all respects. As to their deceiving me, that may very likely be; the suspicion is well founded; nevertheless I don't believe it. I'm a dog if I can yet see upon what you have been able to take this chimera in your head. Lucilia, in my opinion, shows love enough for you, she sees you, talks to you every hour of the day; and Valere, after all, who is the cause of your fear, seems to be suffered at present only through constraint.

Erastus. A lover is often fed with false hope. The best received are not always the most beloved. Whatever affection women may show, 'tis often but a fine veil to cover their passion for others. In short, Valere has lately shown too much tranquillity for a repulsed lover; and as to his showing joy, or at least indifference, at those favours which you think done to me, 'tis what poisons continually their greatest charms to me, gives me an anxiety which thou dost not comprehend, holds my happiness in suspense, and makes an entire confidence in what Lucilia says very difficult to me. To think my destiny truly happy, I would see him transported with jealousy a little; and from his displeasure and impatience my heart would then receive full assurance. Dost thou thyself think it possible for anyone to see a rival caressed, as he does, with a contented

mind? And if thou believest nothing of it, yet tell me, I conjure thee, if I have room to be perplexed about this affair.

Gros-Renard. Perhaps he has changed his inclinations, knowing that he sighed in vain.

Erastus. When a heart is set free by repulses, it flies the object with which it was affected, and does not break its chain with so little trouble as to be able to continue in a peaceable state. Our having been fond before of the fatal presence, prevents our being ever left in indifference; and if our disdain does not increase at the sight of her we loved, our love is very near returning again; in short, believe me, though our flame be extinguished never so well, a little jealousy still dwells in the breast; and one can't see, without concern, the heart which we have missed of, possessed by another.

Gros-Renard. For my part, I don't understand so much philosophy; what my eyes see, I freely believe, and am not such a mortal enemy to myself, as to go to disturb myself without a cause, or so much as half a cause. Why should one refine so much, and labour to be able to find out reasons to be miserable? Shall I go to alarm myself about castles in the air? Let Lent come, before we keep it. The spleen appears to me to be an incommodious thing; and for my part, I never entertain it without good and just cause; and truly a hundred things very frequently come in my sight to give it me, which I don't think fit to see. I run the same risk in love as you do, and the concern you have ought to be common to me; the mistress can't abuse your fidelity, but that the maid will do the same by me; but I avoid the thought of it with an extreme deal of care. I am willing to believe people when they say, "I love thee," and don't go to inquire, in order to esteem myself happy if Mascaril tears his hair off his head or not. Let Marinetta but suffer herself to be kissed and caressed by Gros-Renard at pleasure, and let that fine rival laugh at it like a fool; I'll laugh my belly-full at it likewise after his example; and see who laughs with the best grace.

Erastus. This is like thy talk.

Gros-Renard. But here I see her coming.

SCENE II

Erastus, Marinetta, Gros-Renard.

Gros-Renard. Hist! Marinetta.

Marinetta. Hey-day! What do you do there?

Gros-Renard. D'ye ask? Faith, we were just now upon you.

Marinetta. Are you there too, sir? Let me die if you have not made me trot about like a Biscay porter for this hour past.

Erastus. How so?

Marinetta. I have walked ten miles to look for you, and promise you in good troth—

Erastus. What?

Marinetta. That you were neither at church, at court, at home, nor in the grand walk.

Gros-Renard. You may swear it.

Erastus. Inform me then, prithee, who made you look for me.

Marinetta. One, in good truth, who has not too much ill-will for you; in one word, my mistress.

Erastus. Ah, dear Marinetta, is thy discourse the true interpreter of her heart? Don't disguise from me a fatal mystery; I should not wish thee any evil for it. For Heaven's sake tell me, if thy charming mistress does not abuse my vows with a false tenderness?

Marinetta. Ha, ha, ha! Whence came this merry motion upon you? Does she not sufficiently show her inclination? What security is there further that your love demands? What would it have?

Gros-Renard. That Valere hang himself at least; without such a trifle as this, his heart won't rest assured.

Marinetta. How so?

Gros-Renard. He's jealous to such a degree.

Marinetta. Of Valere? hah! truly the fancy is very fine! It could only be hatched in your brain. I thought you a man of sense, and till this moment had a good opinion of your wit, but by what I see I was very much deceived. Is thy head touched with this distemper too?

Gros-Renard. I jealous! Heaven defend me from it, and from being so mad as to go and make myself lean with such a concern. Besides that thy fidelity assures me of thy heart, the opinion I have of myself is too good to believe that any other could please thee after me. Where the deuce could you find one equal to me?

Marinetta. In truth, you say right, that's as it should be. A jealous man should never discover his suspicions; all the fruit he gathers from it is to disturb himself, and by the same means advance the designs of a rival. Your spleen often opens a mistress's eyes to a merit, the brightness of which hurts your-

selves; and I know one who owes his gentle destiny to the too great uneasiness of his jealous rival. In short, be it as it will, to show suspicion in love is to play a very bad part, and after all to make one's self miserable upon trust. This, Erastus, is said to you by the bye.

Erastus. Very well, let us talk no more of it. What have you to say to me?

Marinetta. You justly deserve to be made to wait. And that to punish you, I should keep concealed from you the grand secret which has made me hunt for you so much. Here, see this letter, and be out of doubt; read it aloud, for here nobody listens.

Erastus. [Reads.] "You told me your love was capable of doing anything. It may be crowned this very day, if it can but get my father's consent. Declare the power you have over my heart, I give you licence to do it; and if it turns in your favour, I shall answer you with my obedience."—Ah! what good fortune is this! for you that brought it me, I ought to regard thee as a deity.

Gros-Renard. I told you so. Contrary to your belief, I'm seldom deceived in things that I think.

Erastus. [Reading it again.] "Declare the power you have over my heart, I give you licence to do it; and if it turns in your favour, I shall answer you with my obedience."

Marinetta. If I should tell her of your weakness in being jealous, she would immediately disown such a letter as this.

Erastus. No, pray conceal my rash fear from her, for which I thought I saw some small matter of reason; or if you do tell it her, tell her at the same time that I'm ready to expiate the error of this madness with my death, and that I'll sacrifice my life at her feet, if I have been capable of displeasing her.

Marinetta. Let us not talk of death, this is no time for it.

Erastus. However I'm very much in thy debt, and intend shortly to acknowledge in a handsome manner the pains of so brave and lovely a messenger.

Marinetta. Well thought on. Do you know where I looked for you just now?

Erastus. Hey—

Marinetta. Very nigh the market, where you know.

Erastus. Where?

Marinetta. There—in that shop where your magnificent heart, several months ago, out of its great bounty, promised me a ring.

Erastus. Um—I understand you.

Gros-Renard. Cunning jade!

Erastus. 'Tis true, I've delayed too long to make good my promise to thee. But—

Marinetta. What I said of it, sir, is not to press you—

Gros-Renard. Oh! no.

Erastus. [Giving her his ring.] This may have something in it to please thee perhaps, accept of this for that which I owe thee.

Marinetta. You only jest, sir, I should be ashamed to take it.

Gros-Renard. Poor shamefaced creature, take it without more ado. To refuse what is given one is to play the fool bravely.

Marinetta. I'll only do it that I may keep something for your sake then.

Erastus. When may I return thanks to that dear angel?

Marinetta. Endeavour to make her father favourable to you.

Erastus. But if he reject me, should I—

Marinetta. That worst come to the worst, we'll employ all sorts of endeavours for you. One way or other she must be yours. Use your might, and we'll use ours.

Erastus. Farewell, we shall know the success of it to-day.

[*Reads the letter again to himself.*]

Marinetta. [To *Gros-Renard.*] And for us, what shall we say too of our amour? Thou dost not speak to me of it.

Gros-Renard. A wished-for wedding, amongst such gentry as we, is a thing soon done. I'll have thee. Wilt thou have me?

Marinetta. Gladly.

Gros-Renard. Shake hands, that's enough.

Marinetta. Farewell, *Gros-Renard*, my delight.

Gros-Renard. Farewell, my star.

Marinetta. Adieu, fair firebrand of my flame.

Gros-Renard. Adieu, dear comet, rainbow of my soul.

[*Exit Marinetta.*] Heaven be praised, our affairs go well; Albert's a man that will refuse you nothing.

Marinetta. Valere is coming to us.

Gros-Renard. I pity the poor wretch, knowing what has passed.

SCENE III

Valcre, Erastus, Gros-Renard.

Erastus. Well, Signor Valere?

Valere. Well, Signor Erastus?

Erastus. How stands your amour?

Valere. How stands yours?

Erastus. Better and better every day.

Valere. So does mine.

Erastus. For Lucilia?

Valere. For her.

Erastus. Certainly, I must own that you are a pattern of uncommon constancy.

Valere. And your firmness ought to be a rare example to posterity.

Erastus. For my part, I'm little calculated for that austere kind of love which finds enough in bare looks to satisfy it, nor can I form fine sentiments enough to suffer ill-treatment with constancy. In short, when I really love, I love to be beloved again.

Valere. 'Tis very natural, and I'm of the same opinion. The most perfect object that I could be charmed with, should never have my devoirs, if I was not beloved by it.

Erastus. However Lucilia—

Valere. Lucilia in her heart, does everything for my passion that I could wish her to do.

Erastus. You are easily contented then.

Valere. Not so easily as you may think.

Erastus. I may however, without too much vanity believe that I'm in her favour.

Valere. And I know that I hold a very good place in't.

Erastus. Don't abuse yourself, but believe me.

Valere. Believe me, and don't let your too credulous eyes make a dupe of you.

Erastus. If I might dare to show you a sure proof that her heart—No, your soul would be moved by it.

Valere. If I might dare to discover a secret to you—But, I should grieve you, and so will be discreet.

Erastus. Since you urge me so, and your presumption forces me to humble it against my desire; read that.

Valere. [After having read it.] These are tender words.

Erastus. You know the hand.

Valere. Yes, Lucilia's.

Erastus. Well, this so certain hope—

Valere. [Laughing, and going away.] Farewell, Signor Erastus.

Gros-Renard. He's a fool, sure. Whence comes it that he should have reason to laugh?

Erastus. Faith, he surprises me, and between us I can't guess what the deuce of a mystery is hid under this.

Gros-Renard. Here comes his footman, I think.

Erastus. Yes, I see him appear; let us play the counterfeit, to set him atalking of his master's amour.

SCENE IV

Erastus, Mascaril, Gros-Renard.

Mascaril. [Aside.] No, I don't find any condition more unfortunate, than to have a young and very amorous master.

Gros-Renard. Good-morrow t'ye.

Mascaril. Good-morrow.

Gros-Renard. Where tends Mascaril at this hour? What does he? comes he back? goes he? or stays he where he is?

Mascaril. No, I'm not come back, for I have not been; neither do I go, because I'm stopped; nor do I stay, for this very moment I intend to be gone.

Erastus. Softly, Mascaril, don't be so extremely rigid.

Mascaril. Hah! Servant, sir.

Erastus. You run away from us very hastily; what, do I frighten you?

Mascaril. I could not think of that, sir, from your courtesy.

Erastus. Shake hands; we have no more cause for jealousy; we'll become friends, and my flame, which I extinguish, leaves free room for your happy designs.

Mascaril. Would to Heaven 'twere so!

Erastus. Gros-Renard knows that I turn me elsewhere.

Gros-Renard. Certainly; and I likewise give up Marinetta to thee.

Mascaril. Let us pass by that point; our rivalry is not such a one as is like to come to a great extremity. But is it a thing for certain that your worship is disenamoured, or is it raillery?

Erastus. I have learned that your master is but too fortunate in his amours, and I should be a fool to pretend any longer to the secret favours which that lady grants to him alone.

Mascaril. Troth, you please me with this news; besides that I was a little afraid of you with regard to our designs, you wisely slip your neck out of the collar. You have done well to leave a place where you were only caressed out of mere grimace; and I, knowing all that passed, have a thousand times bemoaned the false hope you were fed with. 'Tis an offence to abuse a man

of honour. But how the deuce, after all, did you find out the trick? for the mutual engagement of their troth had only Mrs. Night, myself, and two others for witnesses. And the chain, which yielded satisfaction to the passion of our lovers, is thought a very great secret to this very time.

Erastus. How! what say you?

Mascaril. I say that I'm astonished, sir, and can't guess who could have told you, that under this false colour, that deceived all the world, and you too, their unequalled passion had joined 'em by a secret marriage.

Erastus. You lie.

Mascaril. Sir, with all my heart.

Erastus. You are a rascal.

Mascaril. Agreed.

Erastus. And this impudence deserves a sound drubbing on the spot.

Mascaril. You have entire power.

Erastus. Ah! Gros-Renard.

Gros-Renard. Sir.

Erastus. I contradict a relation which I but too much fear.

[To *Mascaril.*] Do you think to fly?

Mascaril. No, no.

Erastus. What! Lucilia is wife to——

Mascaril. No, sir, I was in jest.

Erastus. Hey! were you in jest, scoundrel?

Mascaril. No, I was not in jest.

Erastus. Is it true then?

Mascaril. No, no, I don't say that.

Erastus. What do you say then?

Mascaril. Alas! I say nothing, for fear I should speak ill.

Erastus. Certify me, if it be a true thing, or an imposture.

Mascaril. 'Tis what you please. I don't come here to dispute anything with you.

Erastus. [Drawing his sword.] Will you tell me? Here's something that will untie your tongue without more ado.

Mascaril. 'Twill make some foolish speech again, be pleased rather, if you think fit, to give me quickly a few bastinadoes, and leave me to scamper off without murmuring.

Erastus. Thou shalt suffer death, or I'll fetch the naked truth out of thy mouth.

Mascaril. Alas! I will tell it then; but perhaps, sir, I shall make you uneasy.

Erastus. Speak. But take great care of what you do;

nothing shall be able to deliver thee from my just rage, if you speak but one word false in what you say.

Mascaril. I agree to't. Break my legs, arms, do worse to me still, kill me, if I in the least impose upon you in anything I have said.

Erastus. This marriage is true then.

Mascaril. My tongue, in this case, made a gross mistake, as I plainly perceive; but in short, the business is just as I told you; and 'twas after five days of nocturnal visits, you serving all the while to cover their sport the better, that the day before yesterday they were joined by this knot. Lucilia ever since makes a less show of the violent love she bears my master, and absolutely will have him impute everything he shall see, and all she does in your favour, to the effect of her high prudence, that would prevent the discovery of their secrets. If in spite of my protestations you doubt my truth, Gros-Renard may come one night along with me, and I'll show him as I stand sentinel, that we have a free access to her in the dark.

Erastus. Out of my sight, villain.

Mascaril. With a very good will, 'tis what I want. [Exit.

Erastus. Well!

Gros-Renard. Well! sir; we are both bit, if the other be true.

Erastus. Ah! the odious rascal is but too much so. I see too much likelihood in all he said; and Valere's behaviour, at sight of this letter, shows plainly their acting in concert, and that this certainly serves for a sham to the passion which that ungrateful woman returns him.

SCENE V

Erastus, Marinetta, Gros-Renard.

Marinetta. I come to give you notice, that this evening my mistress permits you to see her in the garden.

Erastus. Darest thou to speak to me, thou double-hearted traitress? Go out of my sight, and tell thy mistress to trouble me no more with her letters, and that this is the way, gipsy, I use 'em. [Tears the letter, and goes out.

Marinetta. Tell me, Gros-Renard.

Gros-Renard. Darest thou to speak to me again, iniquitous female? Deceitful crocodile! whose felonious heart is worse than a satrap, or a Lestrigon. Go, go, carry an answer to your lovely mistress, and tell her, well and good, that for all her

suppleness, neither my master, nor I, are any longer fools, and that henceforth she and thee may go to the devil together.

Marinetta. [Alone] Poor Marinetta, art thou really awake? What devil are they possessed with? What? to give such a reception to our obliging favours. How will this surprise the good people at home!

ACT II

SCENE I

Ascanius, Frosina.

Frosina. I am a girl of secrecy, thank Heaven, Ascanius.

Ascanius. But are we secure enough here for such a conversation? Let us take care that nobody surprise us, or overhear the least passage.

Frosina. We should be much less secure in the house; here we may easily see on all sides, and may speak with all safety.

Ascanius. Alas, what pain is it to me to break silence!

Frosina. Hey-day! this must be an important secret then.

Ascanius. Too much so, since I even tell it you with regret, and which you should not know if I could hide it any longer.

Frosina. Fie, this is an affront to me, to scruple opening yourself to me, whom you have found of so reserved a disposition in all your concerns. Me who was nursed with you, and have kept secret things of so great importance to you! who know—

Ascanius. Yes, you know the secret reason, which conceals from the eyes of the world my sex and family. You know that I'm in this house, where I have passed my infancy, in order to preserve the inheritance which would have devolved to others at the death of young Ascanius, whose fate is revived by this disguise of mine, and for this reason I dare to open my heart to you with more confidence. But before we go upon this conversation, Frosina, clear up a doubt that I continually fall into. Can it be possible that Alberto should know nothing of the mystery which thus disguises my sex, and makes him my father?

Frosina. In good troth, the point you press me upon is a business which sufficiently puzzles me too. The bottom of this

affair is a secret to me, nor could my mother give me any light into the matter. When this son died, who was so much beloved, and who had great legacies left him, even before he came to light, by the will of a careful uncle, who wallowed in wealth, his mother made a secret of his death, fearing that her husband, who was absent at that time, would have run mad to have seen the great inheritance, from which his family reaped so much advantage, devolve to another. I say, to hide this accident, it was thought proper to take you into our family, where you were nursed up; your mother agreed to this cheat, which filled up the place of this son again; and secrecy was promised for a few presents. Alberto has never known it from us, and as for his wife, having kept it in her breast for more than twelve years, and the illness she died of being sudden, her unexpected death hindered anything from being discovered by her. But notwithstanding, I perceive that he holds intelligence with your real mother. I know too that in private he does her some kindness, and perhaps he does not do this for nothing. On the other hand he would bring you to marry, and as he intends the match, 'tis a puzzling story, unless he knows the imposture without knowing your sex. But this digression has insensibly carried us too far out of the way, let us return to the secret, which I'm impatient to hear.

Ascanius. Know then, that Cupid can't be deceived, that my sex has not been able to disguise itself from his eyes, and that his subtle shafts, have under the habit that I wear, reached the heart of a weak woman. In short I'm in love.

Frosina. In love!

Ascanius. Soft, Frosina; don't be quite astonished; 'tis not time yet; for this wounded heart has something else to tell you, that will truly surprise you.

Frosina. What's that?

Ascanius. I'm in love with Valere.

Frosina. Ha! you are in the right, to love one from whose family your imposture takes away a great inheritance, and who, if he had the least notice of your sex, would presently regain it. This is still a greater subject of astonishment.

Ascanius. I have something to surprise you still more with. I am his wife.

Frosina. O Heavens, his wife?

Ascanius. Yes, his wife.

Frosina. Ha! this outdoes all indeed, and is beyond all my reason.

Ascanius. This is not all yet.

Frosina. Not yet!

Ascanius. I am his wife, I say, without his knowing it, nor has he the least knowledge of what I am.

Frosina. Hoy! go on, I have done, and will reason no more about it, my senses are confounded at every word. I can't comprehend anything of these riddles.

Ascanius. I'll explain 'em to you, if you will but hear me. Valere, bound in my sister's chains, appeared to me a lover worthy to be hearkened to. I could not bear to see his passion rejected, without being a little interested for him at heart. I would have had Lucilia taken pleasure in his conversation, I blamed her severity, and blamed it so effectually, that I myself, without being able to help it, entered into all those sentiments which she could not entertain. 'Twas in talking to her that he persuaded me, suffering myself to be overcome by those sighs which he threw away; and those vows of his which were rejected by the object he was enamoured with, were like conquerors received into my breast. Thus, Frosina, my too weak heart, alas, yielded to services that were not paid to it; received a wound by a rebounded stroke, and with mighty usury paid another's debt. At last, my dear, at last the love I had for him, forced me to declare myself, but under the name of another, and this too amiable lover thought he had found in me, one night, Lucilia favourable to his vows, and I managed that conversation so well, that he found out nothing of the disguise. Under this deceitful veil, which flattered his imagination, I told him, that my heart was enamoured with him, but that finding my father was of another opinion, I owed a seeming compliance to his commands; that therefore we must make a secret of our love, with which the night should be only acquainted, and that all private conversation must be avoided by us in the daytime, for fear of doing any mischief. That he should look on me then with the same indifference that he did before we had any intelligence together; and that on his part, as well as mine, nothing should be discovered either by gesture, word, or writing. In short, without dwelling upon all the industry with which I conducted the thread of this deceit, I have driven this bold project to a head, and have secured myself the husband I told you.

Frosina. So, so, what great talents you are mistress of! Would one think it of her with that cold mien? However, you have been pretty hasty here; for though I grant that the

thing has succeeded hitherto, don't you think fit to regard the issue of it which can't long avoid being known.

Ascanius. When love is strong, nothing can stop it, its own projects can alone satisfy it, and provided it arrives at the mark it proposes, it looks upon everything afterwards as a mere trifle. But in short, I now discover myself to you, that your counsel—But here comes my husband.

SCENE II

Valere, Ascanius, Frosina.

Valere. If you are in any conference, which my presence is injurious to, I'll retire.

Ascanius. No, no, you may very well break off our conversation, since you were the cause of it.

Valere. I?

Ascanius. You yourself.

Valere. How so?

Ascanius. I was saying, that if I had been a woman, Valere would have been too well able to please me; and if I were the object of all his vows, I should not long delay to make him happy.

Valere. These protestations don't cost much, since there is such an obstacle to their effect; but you'd be finely caught if some accident should put this tender compliment to the proof.

Ascanius. Not at all. I tell you that if I reigned in your heart, I would very willingly crown your passion.

Valere. And what if 'twere one with whom, by your assistance, you might contribute to my happiness?

Ascanius. I could very ill answer your request.

Valere. This confession is not mighty obliging.

Ascanius. What, Valere! If I were a woman, and loved you tenderly, would you unjustly go to engage my promise to assist your passion for another mistress? Such a painful task would not do for me.

Valere. But that not being the thing?

Ascanius. What I have said to you, I have said as a woman, and you ought to take it so.

Valere. So then I must not at all pretend to the goodwill you have for me, Ascanius, unless Heaven works in you a great miracle; that is, if you are not a woman, farewell to your affection; there's nothing else can make you interest yourself for me.

Ascanius. I am of a more delicate temper than you can imagine, and the least scruple offends me; when love's in the case I am always sincere; I'll not engage to serve you, Valere, if you don't at least absolutely assure me that you have the same sentiments for me, that you are transported with a like warmth of friendship, and that if I were a woman, no stronger passion should get the better of that by which I lived for you.

Valere. I never met with such a jealous scruple; but, as new as it is, the affection is obliging to me, and I here promise you whatever you demand.

Ascanius. But without deceit?

Valere. Yes, without deceit.

Ascanius. If 'tis true, henceforth I promise you, your interests shall be mine.

Valere. I have an important mystery to tell you by and by, in which the effect of those words will be necessary to me.

Ascanius. And I have likewise a secret to discover to you, wherein your affection for me may show itself.

Valere. Hey-day! how can that be?

Ascanius. The thing is, that I have a love-affair which I dare not reveal, and you have power enough over the object of my passion to be able to make my lot happy.

Valere. Explain yourself, Ascanius, and be assured beforehand that your happiness is certain, if 'tis in my power.

Ascanius. You promise here more than you imagine.

Valere. No, no; tell me the person for whom you employ me.

Ascanius. 'Tis not yet a proper time; but 'tis one that's nearly related to you.

Valere. Your discourse amazes me. Pray Heaven my sister—

Ascanius. This is not a proper time to explain myself, I tell you.

Valere. Why so?

Ascanius. For a reason. You shall know my secret when I know yours.

Valere. I must have another's leave for that.

Ascanius. Get it then, and when we unfold our passions, we shall see which of the two will keep their word best.

Valere. Adieu, I am content with that.

Ascanius. And I am content, Valere. [Exit *Valere.*]

Frosina. He thinks to find in you the assistance of a brother.

SCENE III

Lucilia, Ascanius, Frosina, Marinetta.

Lucilia. [To *Marinetta*.] 'Tis done; thus I may revenge myself; and if this action be sufficient to torment him, 'tis all the pleasure my heart could propose.—Brother, you perceive a change here; I am now resolved, after so much ill-usage, to encourage *Valere*, and my love turns on that side at present.

Ascanius. What do you say, sister? How! Will you become changeable? This inconstancy seems to me very strange.

Lucilia. Yours surprises me with more reason; *Valere* was the object of your good services once. I have known you accuse me on his account, of caprice, blind cruelty, pride, and injustice; and now when I resolve to love him, my intention displeases you, and I find you speaking against his interest.

Ascanius. I leave his, sister, to embrace yours. I know that he is listed under the command of another, and 'twould be a dishonour to your charms if you call him back, and he does not come.

Lucilia. If that's all, I'll take care of my honour; I know what I'm to believe of his heart; he has very intelligibly laid it open to my sight; so you may discover my sentiments to him without any fear. Or if you refuse to do it, my own mouth shall let him know that I am touched with his passion. What? you stand thunderstruck, brother, at those words!

Ascanius. Oh! sister, if I have any power over you, if you are sensible to a brother's entreaties, quit any such design, and don't take away *Valere* from the love of a young creature whose interest is dear to me, and whom, upon my word, you ought to be concerned for; the poor wretch loves with violence; to me alone she discloses her flame, and I perceive in her heart such a tender affection as might subdue the greatest fierceness. Yes, you would pity the condition of her mind, if you knew what stroke you threaten her passion with; and I so well feel the grief she would be in, that I'm certain, sister, she'd die of it, if you rob her of the lover who alone can give her pleasure. *Erastus* is a match that ought to satisfy you, and mutual fires—

Lucilia. Brother, enough. I don't know for whom you are concerned; but pray let us give over this discourse I beg of you, and leave me to consider a little.

Ascanius. Well, cruel sister! you'll leave me to despair if you effect the intentions which you have declared.

SCENE IV

Lucilia, Marinetta.

Marinetta. Your resolution, madam, is very hasty.

Lucilia. A heart weighs nothing when 'tis once affronted, it flies to its revenge, and hastily lays hold of whatever it thinks can serve its resentment. The traitor! to show this extreme insolence!

Marinetta. You see me yet quite besides myself with it; and though I ruminant upon it without any end, the adventure is out of my reach, and my Latin's lost upon't. For in short, never did heart open itself in a handsomer manner at the raptures of good news, for he was so transported with the kind letter that he no less than defied me; and yet at this other message, never was poor girl treated so scurvily. I can't imagine what could happen in such a few moments to occasion so great a change.

Lucilia. Nothing could happen which he could be in pain about, nor shall anything secure him from my hatred. What? would you look for any secret reason for this affront but in his own baseness? Will the unfortunate letter, which I now accuse myself for, suffer the least excuse for his madness?

Marinetta. Why indeed, I find you are in the right, and that this quarrel is flat treachery. We are bit, madam; and yet we listen to those goodly hang-dogs who chant out wonders to us; who, to hook us in, feign so much languishing; we let our rigour melt to their fine words, and give up ourselves to their protestations, weak as we are. Shame on our folly, and a plague take the men!

Lucilia. Well, well, let him boast, and laugh at our expense, he shall not have cause to triumph upon it long; for I'll let him see that, in a generous soul, contempt follows close on rejected kindness.

Marinetta. At least, in such a case, 'tis a great happiness to know that they have no advantage over us. *Marinetta* was in the right, whatever they may say of it, to suffer nothing one night when some people were in a very merry humour. Another, in hopes of matrimony, would have listened to the temptation; but *Nescio vos*, quoth I.

Lucilia. What follies you talk of! and what an unseasonable time you have chosen for such sallies! In short I am sensibly touched at heart, and if ever that perfidious lover should by good fortune, (which I am in the wrong, I think, at present to conceive any hope of, for Heaven has taken too much pleasure

in afflicting me to put it in my power to be revenged of him.) whenever I say, by a propitious chance, he should return to offer me his life as a sacrifice, and at my feet to declare his detestation of this day's behaviour, I forbid thee above all things to speak to me for him; on the contrary, I would have you express your zeal by setting fully before me the greatness of his crime; and if my heart should be tempted by him ever to descend to any meanness, let your affection be then severe to me, and support my anger as it ought.

Marinetta. Oh! don't fear, leave that to us. I have at least as much passion as you, and I would rather be a maid all my life than that my fat rascal should give me any liking to him again.—If he comes—

SCENE V

Marinetta, Lucilia, Alberto.

Alberto. Go in again, Lucilia, and bid the tutor come to me; I would discourse him a little, and learn from him who has the government of Ascanius, if he knows or not what uneasiness has lately attended him.

SCENE VI

Alberto. [Alone.] Into what a gulf of cares and perplexities does one unjust action cast us. My heart has long suffered a great deal of punishment for forging a son, through my too great avarice; and when I look on the mischiefs that I'm plunged into, I heartily wish I had never thought on't. Sometimes I'm afraid of beholding my family cast into misery and shame by the cheat being discovered; sometimes I fear a hundred accidents that may happen to this son, whom it concerns me to preserve. If any business happens to call me abroad, I'm apprehensive of this sorrowful news at my return; soh! don't you know it? have they told you of it? your son has a fever; or his leg or arm is broken. In short every moment, be about what I will, a thousand troubles come into my head. Ah!—

SCENE VII

Alberto, Metaphrastus.

Metaphrastus. *Mandatum tuum curo diligenter.*

Alberto. Master, I want to—

Metaphrastus. Master is derived from *magis ter*; 'tis as though you should say *three times greater*.

Alberto. May I die if I knew that; but in good time be it so.
Master then—

Metaphrastus. Proceed.

Alberto. So I would proceed, but don't you proceed to interrupt me thus. Once more then, master, for the third time. My son gives me concern; you know that I love him, and that I have always carefully brought him up.

Metaphrastus. 'Tis true: *Filio non potest præferri nisi filius.*

Alberto. Master, in common discourse this jargon is not at all necessary, I think; I believe you a great Latinist, and a sworn doctor; I rely on those who assured me so. But in a conversation that I design to have with you, don't go to display all your learning, to play the pedant, and to sputter out a hundred words upon me, as if you were in a pulpit preaching. My father, though he had one of the best heads, never taught me anything but my mass-book, which, though I have said it daily for fifty years, is still high Dutch to me. Have done therefore with your pompous learning, and adapt your language to my weak understanding.

Metaphrastus. Be it so.

Alberto. To come to my son then. Matrimony seems to frighten him, and whatever match I found his heart upon, he is cold to it, and draws back.

Metaphrastus. Perhaps he may be of the humour of Mark Tully's brother, of which he discoursed to Atticus, and which the Greeks call Athanatos.

Alberto. For Heaven's sake, thou eternal schoolmaster, I beg of ye to have done with the Greeks, the Albanians and Esclavonians, and all the other nations you want to talk of; they and my son have nothing to do together.

Metaphrastus. Well then, your son?

Alberto. I don't know if he has not some secret flame in his breast; something troubles him, or I'm much deceived; and I perceived him yesterday, without his seeing me, in a corner of a wood where no creature ever goes—

Metaphrastus. In the recess of a wood you mean, a recluse place, Latin, *secessus*; Virgil says, *est in secessu locus*—

Alberto. How the devil could Virgil say that, since I'm certain that in that secret place there was not one soul in the world but us two.

Metaphrastus. Virgil was mentioned as a famous author of a more chosen term than the word you used, and not as a witness of what you saw yesterday.

Alberto. I tell you that I neither want a more chosen term, author, or witness, and that my own testimony is here sufficient.

Metaphrastus. However you ought to choose the words which are used by the best authors; *tu vivendo bonos*, as the saying is, *scribendo, sequare peritos*.

Alberto. Good man, or rather devil, wilt thou hear me without disputing?

Metaphrastus. That's Quintilian's precept.

Alberto. Plague take the babbler!

Metaphrastus. And thereupon he says a very learned thing, which you would most assuredly be glad to hear.

Alberto. The deuce take thee for a puppy! Oh how strangely am I tempted to apply something to those chops!

Metaphrastus. But sir, what's the occasion of your being inflamed thus? What would you have of me?

Alberto. I have told you twenty times that I would have you hear me when I speak.

Metaphrastus. Oh! undoubtedly, you shall be satisfied if that's all; I am silent.

Alberto. You do wisely.

Metaphrastus. I am ready to hear you.

Alberto. So much the better.

Metaphrastus. May I die if I say another word.

Alberto. Heaven grant that.

Metaphrastus. You shan't accuse me of talkativeness henceforth.

Alberto. Be it so.

Metaphrastus. Speak when you will.

Alberto. I'm going to do it.

Metaphrastus. And don't apprehend any more interruption from us.

Alberto. That's enough.

Metaphrastus. I am more punctual than anyone.

Alberto. I believe so.

Metaphrastus. I have promised to say nothing.

Alberto. 'Tis sufficient.

Metaphrastus. From this moment I'm dumb.

Alberto. Very well.

Metaphrastus. Speak; come on; I'll give you a hearing at least; don't complain of my want of silence again; I won't so much as open my mouth.

Alberto. [Aside.] Traitor!

Metaphrastus. But pray finish quickly; since I hear a long time, it's very reasonable that I speak in my turn.

Alberto. Detestable blockhead!

Metaphrastus. Hey! good lack! would you have me hear always? Let me partake of speaking, or I'll be gone.

Alberto. My patience is really—

Metaphrastus. What, will you proceed? not done yet?
Per Jovem, I'm cloyed.

Alberto. I have not spoken a—

Metaphrastus. Again? good Heavens! What an harangue! can nothing stop the current of it?

Alberto. [Aside.] I am mad.

Metaphrastus. Still? O what a strange torture! Hey! let me speak a little I conjure you; a fool that says nothing does not distinguish himself from a wise man that holds his peace.

Alberto. S'death! I'll make thee hold thine.

SCENE VIII

Metaphrastus. [Alone.] From thence comes very properly that sentence of the philosopher: "Speak, that I may know thee." Therefore if the power of speaking is taken from me, for my part I would choose to lose my humanity too, and change my essence for that of a beast. I shall have the headache these eight days. Oh how I detest great talkers! But what? if learned men are not heard, if people would have their mouths always closed, the order of everything must then be overturned; the chickens in a little time will devour the fox; young children remonstrate to old men; the lambs take pleasure in pursuing the wolf; the fool make laws; women fight; judges be tried by the criminals; and masters whipped by the scholars; the sick man prescribe physic to the sound; the timorous hare—

SCENE IX

Alberto, Metaphrastus.

Alberto rings a bell in the ears of Metaphrastus, and drives him off.

Metaphrastus. Mercy on me! Help, help!

ACT III

SCENE I

Mascaril. Heaven sometimes helps on a rash design, and we must get out of a scurvy affair as well as we can. As for me, who have imprudently talked too much, the readiest remedy I could have recourse to was to push my point, and immediately tell our old patron the whole intrigue. His son, that perplexes me, is a giddy-brained mortal. The other devil, by telling what I discovered to him, has made a rent in our jacket. However, before his fury can be kindled, something fortunate may happen for us, and the old men may agree amongst themselves. This is what I'm going to attempt, and without losing a moment must, by my master's order, find out Alberto.

[Knocks at Alberto's door.]

SCENE II

Alberto, Mascaril.

Alberto. Who knocks?

Mascaril. A friend.

Alberto. Hey-day, what could bring thee hither, Mascaril?

Mascaril. I come, sir, to bid you good-morrow.

Alberto. Hah! truly you take a great deal of pains. Good-morrow then, with all my heart. [Going.]

Mascaril. The reply is quick! What a blunt man 'tis!

[Knocks.]

Alberto. Again.

Mascaril. You have not heard me, sir——

Alberto. Didst not thou bid me good-morrow?

Mascaril. Yes.

Alberto. Well, good-morrow, I say.

[Going, Mascaril stops him.]

Mascaril. Yes; but I come likewise to salute you in the name of Signor Polidor.

Alberto. Oh! that's another thing. Has thy master ordered thee to make his compliments to me.

Mascaril. Yes.

Alberto. I am obliged to him; go, I wish him all happiness.

[Goes out.]

Mascaril. This man is an enemy to ceremony. [Knocks.] I have not finished his compliment, sir, he would desire one thing of you instantly.

Alberto. Well, whenever he pleases, I am at his service.

Mascaril. [Stopping him.] Stay, and let me make an end in two words. He desires to talk with you a moment about an important affair, and he'll come hither.

Alberto. Hey? what affair can it be that makes him desire to talk with me?

Mascaril. A great secret, I tell you, which he has this moment discovered, and which, certainly, greatly concerns you both. This is my message.

SCENE III

Alberto. [Alone.] O just heavens! how I tremble; for in short we have little acquaintance together. Some tempest is going to overturn my designs, and this secret is certainly that which I fear. The hope of interest has made somebody unfaithful to me, and so there's an eternal blot upon my honour; my cheat is discovered. O how difficult it is to keep the truth long concealed! How much better had it been for me, and my reputation, to have followed the instigations of a just fear, by which I have been twenty times tempted to give up to Polidor an estate which I owe him, to prevent the clamour this stroke will expose me to, and cause everything to pass in silence. But alas, 'tis over, there's no longer an opportunity, and this wealth which came into my family by fraud, won't be taken out of it, without carrying away the best part of mine along with it.

SCENE IV

Polidor, Alberto.

Polidor. [Not seeing *Alberto*.] To be thus married without one's knowing anything of it! Can this action end well? I know not what to think on't, and I much fear the great wealth and just anger of the father.—But I see him there alone.

Alberto. O Heavens! here comes Polidor.

Polidor. I tremble to accost him.

Alberto. Fear keeps me back.

Polidor. How shall I begin?

Alberto. What shall I say?

Polidor. He's in a great passion.

Alberto. He changes colour.

Polidor. I see, Signor Alberto, by the trouble that appears in your eyes, that you know already what brings me to this place.

Alberto. Alas! yes.

Polidor. You might well be surprised at the news, and I could scarce believe what I just now heard.

Alberto. I ought to blush with shame and confusion.

Polidor. I think such an action culpable, and don't pretend to excuse the guilty.

Alberto. Heaven pities a miserable sinner.

Polidor. That's what ought to be considered by you.

Alberto. One should be Christian-like.

Polidor. That's most certain.

Alberto. Mercy, for Heaven's sake, mercy, Signor Polidor.

Polidor. 'Tis I who now implore it of you.

Alberto. In order to obtain it, I cast myself at your feet.

Polidor. I ought rather to be in that posture than you.

Alberto. Have some pity on my misfortune.

Polidor. After such an injury I am the suppliant.

Alberto. You break my heart with this goodness.

Polidor. You confound me with so much humility.

Alberto. Once more pardon.

Polidor. Alas! do you pardon.

Alberto. I'm under a great deal of grief for this action.

Polidor. And I am touched to the last degree by the same.

Alberto. I presume to conjure you not to let it be made public.

Polidor. Alas, Signor Alberto, I wish nothing else.

Alberto. Let us preserve my honour.

Polidor. Oh! yes, I'm disposed to do't.

Alberto. As to the money you must have, you yourself shall determine it.

Polidor. I would have no more of your money but what you please yourself. Of all those concerns I'll make you master, and I'm above measure content if you can be so.

Alberto. Ha! what a god-like man! what excess of sweetness!

Polidor. What sweetness in yourself after such a misfortune!

Alberto. May you have all things prove prosperous.

Polidor. May Heaven preserve you.

Alberto. Let us embrace like brothers.

Polidor. I consent to't, with all my heart, and am much rejoiced that all's ended in a happy agreement.

Alberto. I thank Heaven for't.

Polidor. Pray don't counterfeit anything, your resentment gives me room to fear: Lucilia having committed a fault with my son, and as you are powerful both in wealth and friends—

Alberto. Hey! what do you talk of faults, and Lucilia?

Polidor. Enough, let us not begin a useless discourse. I own my son is greatly to blame in the affair, nay, if that will be any ease to you, I'll own that he alone is in fault; that your daughter had too refined a virtue to have ever made this dishonourable step, without the instigation of a wicked seducer. That the traitor has betrayed her innocent modesty, and thus destroyed the expectation of your conduct. But since the thing is done, and according to my wishes, a spirit of good nature has joined us in agreement, let us have nothing of it over again, but repair the offence by the solemnity of a happy alliance.

Alberto. [Aside.] Oh Heavens! what a mistake is this! what do I hear? I fall here from one trouble into another as great. In these different transports I know not what to answer, and if I speak a word, I'm afraid of confounding myself.

Polidor. What are you thinking of, Signor Alberto?

Alberto. Nothing. Let us defer, pray, our conference for a while. A sudden illness seizes me, which obliges me to leave you.

SCENE V

Polidor. [Alone.] I can look into his soul, and read what disturbs him, and though his reason guided him at first, his displeasure is not yet quite appeased. The image of the affront returns to him, and he endeavoured, by leaving me, to disguise the trouble he was tortured with. I take part in his confusion, and his grief touches me. A little time must settle his mind. Sorrow too much restrained easily redoubles. O here's my young fool, who gives us all this trouble.

SCENE VI

Polidor, Valere.

Polidor. In short, young spark, your fine behaviour grieves your poor old father every moment. You act new wonders every day, and we never hear of anything else.

Valere. What do I act every day, that's so very criminal? By what do I so much merit a father's displeasure?

Polidor. I am a strange man, and of a terrible humour, to accuse so wise and peaceable a child. Why, he lives like a

saint; and is in the house at prayers from morning to evening. To say that he perverts the order of nature, and turns day into night, O! 'tis a grand deceit! That he neither regards father nor kindred, upon twenty occasions; horrible falsity! That he was very lately matched to the daughter of Alberto, by a stolen wedding, without fearing the mighty disorder that would follow. They take him for another sure! The poor innocent creature doesn't so much as know what I mean! Oh! thou rascal, whom Heaven has sent me for my punishment, wilt thou always follow thy own imaginations? and shall I never see thee do one wise action before my death?

[*Exit.*]

Valere. [Alone, musing.] From whence can this stroke proceed? my perplexed mind can find none to imagine it of, but Mascaril. But he'll ne'er confess it to me; I must make use of some address, and curb myself a little in my just passion.

SCENE VII

Valere, Mascaril.

Valere. Mascaril, my father, whom I just now saw, knows all our affair.

Mascaril. Does he know it?

Valere. Yes.

Mascaril. How the deuce could he know it?

Valere. I don't know on whom to fix my conjecture; but in short, the business has had such success, that I have all the reason in the world to be transported. He has not said a cross word to me upon't; he excuses my fault, and approves my flame, and I should be glad to know who could be capable of making him so very tractable. I can't express to thee the satisfaction it gives me.

Mascaril. And what would you say to me, sir, if 'twas I who had procured this good fortune for you?

Valere. Good, good, you would procure yourself one by it, I see.

Mascaril. 'Tis I, I tell you, I, that your father knows it from; and who have produced this favourable consequence for you.

Valere. But is it so, without a jest?

Mascaril. The deuce take me if I jest, and if it is not thus.

Valere. [Drawing his sword.] And may he take me, if thou dost not this moment receive the just reward for it.

Mascaril. Hah! what now, sir? I bar surprise.

Valere. Is this the fidelity you promised me? Without my counterfeiting you would never have owned the trick, which I justly imagined you had played me. Thou rascal, whose tongue has been too able to provoke my father against me, and utterly ruin me; thou shalt die without saying another word.

Mascaril. Hold, my soul is not in a good condition for death. Pray now stay, and see the success this adventure will have. I had good reasons which made me reveal a marriage, which you yourself could scarce conceal. 'Twas a piece of policy, and you'll find that the issue will condemn the fury you are in. Why should you vex yourself, if your desires are fully satisfied through my care, and an end be put to the constraint you were under.

Valere. And what if all this talk of thine is nothing but flattery?

Mascaril. Why then you'll have time enough to kill me. But in short, my projects may prove effectual; Heaven will do for its own, and you'll be content in the end, and thank me for my good conduct.

Valere. Well, we shall see. But Lucilia—

Mascaril. Hold, here comes her father.

SCENE VIII

Alberto, Valere, Mascaril.

Alberto. [Not seeing *Valere*.] The more I recover from the perplexity I was in at first, the more I find myself disturbed at this strange story, which gave such a dangerous change to my fear; for *Lucilia* maintains that 'tis all a jest, and has talked to me in a manner that has taken away all suspicion.—Ha! sir, is it you whose notorious boldness makes a jest of my honour, and invents this base story?

Mascaril. Pray, Signor *Alberto*, make use of a little more gentle tone, and don't be so angry with your son-in-law.

Alberto. How! son-in-law, rascal? you look as if you moved the springs of this machine, and were the first inventor of it.

Mascaril. I see nothing here to put you in a passion.

Alberto. Do you think it right, pray, to defame my daughter, and to bring such a scandal on a whole family?

Mascaril. He's ready to do your will in everything.

Alberto. What would I have him do but tell the truth? If he had any inclination for *Lucilia*, his pursuit of her should have been honourable and handsome; he should have applied to her

on the side of duty, and should have asked her father's leave, and not have had recourse to this base contrivance, which gives such a sensible stroke to modesty.

Mascaril. What! Is not Lucilia under secret ties to my master?

Alberto. No, rascal, nor ever shall be so.

Mascaril. Softly; if it's true that this thing is done, will you approve of that secret chain?

Alberto. And if it is certain that it is not so, wilt thou have thy bones broken?

Valere. 'Tis easy, sir, to make it appear to you that he says true.

Alberto. Good, there's another, a worthy master of such a man. O what impudent liars!

Mascaril. As I am a man of honour, 'tis so as I say.

Valere. What could be our aim in making you believe it?

Alberto. [Aside.] They understand one another like pick-pockets in a fair.

Mascaril. But let us come to the proof, and without quarrelling, call out Lucilia and let her speak.

Alberto. And what if she contradicts you?

Mascaril. She'll not do it, sir, I assure you. Promise but your consent to their love, and I'll expose myself to the severest punishment if she does not with her own mouth confess to you, both the faith she has engaged, and the ardour that urges her.

Alberto. We must see this business out.

[Goes to knock at his door.

Mascaril. [To *Valere.*] Come, all will go well.

Alberto. Ho! Lucilia! a word with you.

Valere. [To *Mascaril.*] I fear—

Mascaril. Fear nothing.

SCENE IX

Lucilia, Alberto, Valere, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Signor Alberto, be silent at least. In short, madam, everything conspires to your heart's happiness, and your father being informed of your love, leaves you your husband, and confirms your vows; provided, that banishing all frivolous fears, a word of acknowledgment from you confirms what we say.

Lucilia. What does this confident rascal say to me?

Mascaril. Good, I'm already honoured with a fine title.

Lucilia. Let us know a little, sir, what fine frolic was the cause of this gallant story that has been spread about to-day.

Valere. Pardon me, charming creature; but my servant has been babbling, and I find our marriage is discovered against my will.

Lucilia. Our marriage!

Valere. 'Tis all known, adorable *Lucilia*, and to endeavour to disguise it is all in vain.

Lucilia. What! the ardour of my passion has made you my husband, has it?

Valere. 'Tis a happiness which ought to make a thousand jealous. But I impute this success of my love much less to the ardour of your passion, than to the goodness of your soul. I know that you have reason to be angry; that 'twas a secret you would have hid, and I myself have restrained the violence of my transports, that I might not violate your express prohibition; but—

Mascalil. Well, yes, 'twas I; a great mischief indeed.

Lucilia. Was there ever an imposture equal to this? Dare you maintain it in my very presence, and think to obtain me by this fine stratagem? O the pleasant lover! whose gallant passion would wound my honour because it could not gain my heart, and would move my father, by the strength of a foolish story, to marry me by way of reward to one who loads me with disgrace. Though even everything contributed to your passion, my father, destiny, and my own inclination, I'd sooner see the light no more than be joined to one that thought to obtain me in this manner. Begone, for if my sex could with decency break out into violence, I would make you know what it was to treat me thus.

Valere. [To *Mascalil.*] 'Tis over with us, her anger can't be appeased.

Mascalil. Let me speak to her. Harkee, madam, to what good, pray, is all this grimace now? What's your meaning? And what capricious transport makes you thus obstinate against your own wishes? If your father was a passionate man, good; but he suffers reason to govern him, and he himself told me that a confession would gain his affection for you. I believe indeed you feel some little shame to make a free acknowledgment of the love that you have yielded to; but if it has lost you a little liberty, all's adjusted again by a good marriage; and though they may reproach the flame that consumes you, the mischief is not so great as if you had murdered a man. People know that

flesh is frail sometimes, and that a maid is neither stock nor stone. You were not the first, that's certain, and you won't be the last I dare believe.

Lucilia. What! can you hear this insolent talk, and not say a word to these indignities?

Alberto. What would you have me say? This affair puts me quite beside myself.

Mascaril. I swear, madam, you ought to have confessed all before now.

Lucilia. Confessed what?

Mascaril. What? why what has passed between my master and you; a fine jest indeed!

Lucilia. And what has passed, audacious monster, between your master and I?

Mascaril. You ought, I think, to know a little more news of that than I; and this night was too sweet a one to you, for one to believe you could lose all memory of it so soon.

Lucilia. This is bearing too much, father, from an impudent footman. [Gives him a box on the ear.

SCENE X

Alberto, Valere, Mascaril.

Mascaril. I think she gave me a box on the ear.

Alberto. Begone, rascal, villain, her hand has done an action upon thee which her father praises her for.

Mascaril. And notwithstanding that, may the devil take me this instant if I have said anything but what's most sure.

Alberto. And notwithstanding that, may I lose an ear if you carry on this impudence much further!

Mascaril. Shall I bring two witnesses to justify me?

Alberto. Shall I bring two of my servants to cudgel you?

Mascaril. Their report ought to make mine credible.

Alberto. Their arms may make up for the impotence of mine.

Mascaril. I tell you that *Lucilia* behaves thus out of bashfulness.

Alberto. I tell you that I'll have reason for all this.

Mascaril. Do you know *Ormin* the fat notable scrivener?

Alberto. Do you know *Grimpant* the city executioner?

Mascaril. And *Simon* the tailor formerly so much followed?

Alberto. And the gibbet set up in the middle of the market?

Mascaril. You'll see this marriage confirmed by them.

Alberto. You shall see your destiny finished by them.

Mascaril. 'Twas those they took for witnesses of their troth.

Alberto. 'Tis these who shall shortly revenge me on thee.

Mascaril. And these eyes saw 'em interchange their promise.

Alberto. And these eyes shall see thee take a swing.

Mascaril. And, for a token, Lucilia had a black veil on.

Alberto. And, for a token, one may see it plainly in your forehead.

Mascaril. O! obstinate old man!

Alberto. O cursed rascal! You may thank my age, which makes me incapable of punishing the affront you have given me upon the spot; but thou shalt lose nothing of it but the waiting for it, I promise thee.

SCENE XI

Valere, Mascaril.

Valere. Soh! the fine success that you were to procure——

Mascaril. I understand at half a word what you mean; everyone is arming against me; I see cudgels and gibbets preparing for me on every side. Therefore that I may be at rest from this extreme disorder, I'll go and cast myself headlong from a rock, if in the despair with which my heart is incensed, I can meet with one that's high enough to please me. Farewell, sir.

Valere. No, no, your flight's in vain, if you do die, I expect it shall be in my sight.

Mascaril. I can't die when anybody looks at me; and by that means my death would be delayed.

Valere. Follow me, traitor, follow me; my enraged love will show thee if 'tis a jesting matter.

Mascaril. Unhappy Mascaril! to what evils dost thou see thyself condemned to-day for another's trespass.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Ascanius, Frosina.

Frosina. 'Tis a vexatious accident.

Ascanius. Ah, my dear Frosina, fate has absolutely concluded my ruin. This affair, now 'tis come to the pitch it is, will certainly not stop there; 'twill go through with it; and Lucilia and Valere, surprised at the novelty of such a mystery, will one day

search into these obscurities, by which means all my projects will prove abortive. For, in short, whether Alberto has part in the stratagem, or he himself be deceived with the rest of the world, if it ever happens that the discovery of my condition should put into the hand of others all the wealth he has engrossed in his own, judge you whether he'll have cause to endure my presence; his interest being destroyed, will leave me to my real birth. His tenderness is over, and whatever sentiment my lover might then have of my stratagem, would he own a girl for his wife, whom he would behold without the support either of family or fortune?

Frosina. I think this is reasoning right; but these reflections should have come sooner. Who has hid this light from you till now? There was no need of being a great conjurer, to see from the first moment of your design upon him, all that your genius never found out till to-day. The action spoke it; and since I have known it, I could never foresee any better issue it could have.

Ascanius. What must I do at last? my trouble cannot be equalled; put yourself in my place, and give me advice.

Frosina. If I take your place, 'twill belong to you to give me advice upon this disgrace. For now I am you, and you are me; counsel me, Frosina, in the condition I am in, what remedy to think of? tell me, I beg you.

Ascanius. Alas! don't treat it with raillery; 'tis taking but little part in my piercing sorrow to laugh, when you see the terms I am on.

Frosina. Ascanius, I am very sensible of your sorrow, and would do all I possibly could to bring you out of it. But what can I do after all? I see very little likelihood of turning this affair to the satisfaction of your love.

Ascanius. If nothing can help me, I must die.

Frosina. Lack-a-day, 'tis always time enough for that; death's a remedy to be found whenever one pleases, and one ought to make use of it the latest one can.

Ascanius. No, no, Frosina, no; if your propitious counsel does not conduct my destiny amongst these precipices, I abandon myself wholly to despair.

Frosina. Do you know my thought? I must go see there —But here comes Erastus, who may disturb us. We may talk of this business as we walk; come let us retire.

SCENE II

*Erastus, Gros-Renard.**Erastus.* Again repulsed?*Gros-Renard.* Never was ambassador less hearkened to. Scarce had I endeavoured to inform her that you desired a moment's conversation with her, but she answered haughtily, Go, go; I value him as much as I do thee; tell him he may walk off; and upon this fine speech turned her face from me, and went on. Marinetta too, with a disdainful phiz, and a "begone, lubbardly foot-fellow," left me planted there as her mistress did. So that your fortune and mine have nothing to reproach one another with.*Erastus.* Ungrateful creature! to receive with so much haughtiness the speedy return of a heart justly provoked! What! is the first transport of a passion, which had so much the appearance of being abused, unworthy of excuse? And ought my lively love to have been insensible in that fatal moment to the happiness of a rival? Would any other not have done the same thing in my place, or been less surprised at so much boldness? Am I too late in leaving my just suspicions? I have not waited for protestations on her part; and though nobody can yet tell what to think of it, my impatient heart yields all its glory to her; it endeavours to excuse her, and can she so little perceive the greatness of my passion through this profound respect? So far from confirming my soul, and furnishing it with arms against the alarms a rival tries to give it, the ungrateful woman abandons me to my excessive jealousy, and refuses me all message, writing, or speech. Ah! an affection has certainly very little violence that's capable of remembering so small an offence; and this disgust, which is so ready to arm itself with rigour, sufficiently discovers to me the bottom of her heart, and what value now all that her caprice has flattered my passion with, ought to be to me. No, I intend to be no longer engaged to a heart where I perceive I have so little share; and since she shows such an extreme coldness whether she keeps one or not, I'll do the same.*Gros-Renard.* And so will I. Let us both be angry, and put our love in the list of old sins; we must learn how to live with this wavering sex, and make 'em feel that we have some courage. He that will bear their contempt will be sure to have it; if we had the wit to set a value upon ourselves, the women would not be so very haughty. O how insolent are they through our

fault! I would be hanged if we should not see 'em cling about our necks more than we desired, if 'twas not for those servile submissions which most men, nowadays, continually spoil 'em with.

Erastus. For my part, contempt shocks me above anything; and to punish hers, by one as great, I'm resolved to cherish a new passion in my heart.

Gros-Renard. And I'll perplex myself no more about women; I renounce 'em all, and believe, in good troth, that you would do very well to do like me. For look, woman is, as one may say, master, a certain animal hard to be known, and whose nature is greatly inclined to mischief. And as an animal is always an animal, and will never be anything but an animal, though its life lasted for an hundred thousand years; so, without raillery, a woman is always a woman, and will never be anything but a woman, as long as the world shall endure. Whence it came that a certain Greek author says, that her head might pass for the moving sand. For pray mark well this reasoning, which is most weighty: For as the head is the chief of the body, and as the body without a chief is worse than a beast; if the chief has not a good agreement with the head, so that everything is not well regulated by its compass, we see certain confusions arise. The brutal part then endeavours to get rule over the sensitive, and we see one pull one way, the other another; one calls for soft, the other for hard; in short everything goes it knows not how. This is to show that here below, according to interpretation, the head of a woman is like a weathercock on the top of a house, which turns with the first wind, wherefore Cousin Aristotle often compares her to the sea, whence it comes to pass that people say, that there's nothing in the world so unstable as the waves; or by comparison, for comparison makes us comprehend a reason distinctly, and we studious folks love a comparison much better than a similitude. By comparison then, if you please, master, as we see that the sea, when a storm rises, begins to foam, the wind blows and rages, billows against billows make a horrible confusion, and the ship in spite of the mariners' teeth, goes sometimes down to the cellar, and sometimes up into the garret. So when she is fantastical in her head, one beholds a tempest in form of a violent storm, which will break out by certain — words and then a — certain wind, which by — certain waves in — a certain manner, like a heap of sand — when — In short woman is worse than the devil.

Erastus. Very well argued.

Gros-Renard. Pretty tolerable, thanks to my stars; but I see 'em, sir, coming this way. Stand firm be sure.

Erastus. Don't be in any pain about it.

Gros-Renard. I'm strangely afraid that her eyes will clinch your chain again.

SCENE III

Lucilia, Erastus, Marinetta, Gros-Renard.

Marinetta. I see him there yet; but don't yield.

Lucilia. Don't you suspect me of weakness in this point.

Marinetta. He comes to us.

Erastus. No, no, think not, madam, that I return again to talk to you of my passion; 'tis all over; I am resolved to cure myself, and know very well how much my heart has possessed of yours. So constant an anger for the shadow of an offence has too plainly discovered your indifference to me, and I ought to show you, that contempt is above all things touching to generous minds. I'll own that my eyes have observed in yours, charms which they never found in any others, and the rapture which my chains gave me, would have made me prefer them to proffered sceptres. Yes, my love for you was undoubtedly extreme, I lived wholly in you; and I'll even own that after all, perhaps I shall still have difficulty enough to disengage myself, notwithstanding the affront. 'Tis possible that notwithstanding the cure I'm attempting, my heart may for a long time bleed with this wound, and that, freed from a yoke which was the cause of all my happiness, I shall resolve never to love again. But in short, 'tis no matter, and since your hatred drives away a heart as oft as love brings it back to you, this is the last importunity that you shall ever have from my rejected addresses.

Lucilia. You may make the favour complete, sir, and spare me this last too.

Erastus. Well, madam, very well, you shall be satisfied. I here break off all acquaintance with you, and break it off for ever, since you will have it so; and may I lose my life when I again desire to converse with you!

Lucilia. So much the better; you'll oblige me.

Erastus. No, no, don't be afraid that I'll falsify my word; had I a heart so weak as not to be able to efface your image, be assured that you shall never have the advantage to see me return.

Lucilia. 'Twould be much in vain if you did.

Erastus. I would sheath my sword in my breast should I

be ever guilty of such excessive meanness as to see you again after this unworthy treatment.

Lucilia. Be it so; let's talk no more of it then.

Erastus. Yes, yes, let's talk no more on't; and to cut off here all superfluous wrangling, and give you a certain proof, ungrateful woman, I'll for ever throw off your chain, I'll keep nothing which may renew an image which 'tis necessary for me to efface from my mind. There's your picture; it presents to the eye a hundred bright charms which you are mistress of, but it conceals underneath them an hundred as monstrous faults; and in short, 'tis an imposture which I restore you.

Gros-Renard. Good.

Lucilia. And, to follow your design of returning everything; there's the diamond which you forced me to take.

Marinetta. Very well.

Erastus. Here's likewise a bracelet of yours.

Lucilia. And this agate is yours, which you made me put in a seal.

Erastus. [Reading.] "You love me with an extreme love, Erastus, and want to know my heart. If I don't love Erastus so much, at least I love that Erastus should thus love me."

LUCILIA."

You assure me by this that you approve of my service; 'tis a falsity worthy of this punishment. [Tears the letter.]

Lucilia. [Reading.] "I'm ignorant of the destiny of my ardent love, and how long I shall suffer. But this I know, beauteous charmer, that I shall always love you

ERASTUS."

This assures me of your love for ever; both the hand and the letter told a lie. [Tears the letter.]

Gros-Renard. Go on.

Erastus. This is yours? enough——the same fortune.

Marinetta. [To *Lucilia.*] Be firm.

Lucilia. I should be sorry to spare one of 'em.

Gros-Renard. [To *Erastus.*] Don't have the last.

Marinetta. Hold out bravely to the end.

Lucilia. Well, there's the rest.

Erastus. And, thank Heaven, here's all. May I be destroyed, if I don't keep my word.

Lucilia. Confound me, Heaven, if mine is frivolous.

Erastus. Farewell then.

Lucilia. Farewell then.

Marinetta. [To *Lucilia*.] It goes well.

Gros-Renard. [To *Erastus*.] You triumph.

Marinetta. [To *Lucilia*.] Come, remove out of his sight.

Gros-Renard. [To *Erastus*.] Retire, after this bold stroke.

Marinetta. [To *Lucilia*.] What do you stay for now?

Gros-Renard. [To *Erastus*.] What would you have more?

Erastus. Ah! *Lucilia*, *Lucilia*! a heart like mine will regret this, and I know it well.

Lucilia. Ah! *Erastus*, *Erastus*, a heart like yours may be easily repaired by another.

Erastus. No, no, search everywhere, you will never find one so passionately fond of you, I assure you. I don't say this to move you; I should be in the wrong now to form any such desire; my most ardent respects were not able to oblige you, you had a mind to break with me; I must think of it no more. But nobody after me, whatever they may pretend, will ever have so tender a passion for you.

Lucilia. When one loves people, one treats 'em otherwise, one makes a better judgment of their person.

Erastus. When one loves people, one may have one's mind seized with jealousy upon strong appearances; but then when one loves 'em one can't in effect resolve to destroy 'em, and that you have done.

Lucilia. Pure jealousy is more respectful.

Erastus. We regard with a gentler eye an amorous offence.

Lucilia. No, your heart, *Erastus*, was not sincerely in love.

Erastus. No, *Lucilia*, you never loved me.

Lucilia. Oh! that torments you much I suppose; it would have been far better perhaps for my life if I——But let us leave this superfluous talk; I don't say what my thoughts are upon it.

Erastus. Why?

Lucilia. Because we break off acquaintance with one another, and this is not a proper season I think for it.

Erastus. Do we break off acquaintance?

Lucilia. Yes to be sure; why is it not done?

Erastus. And you see it with a satisfied mind.

Lucilia. Like you.

Erastus. Like me?

Lucilia. 'Tis certainly weakness to let people see that we are grieved at the loss of 'em.

Erastus. But 'tis you, cruel woman, that would have it so.

Lucilia. I? not at all; 'tis you who had fully resolved upon't.

Erastus. I? I thought I had given you great pleasure in it.

Lucilia. No, you had a mind to give yourself satisfaction.

Erastus. But if my heart still desired its poison again; if quite provoked, as it is, it would beg pardon—

Lucilia. No, no, don't do it; my weakness is too great, I should be afraid I might too soon grant your request.

Erastus. Oh! you cannot too soon grant it me, nor can I, upon that fear, too soon ask it. Consent to it, madam; so pure a flame ought to remain immortal for your own sake. In short I ask it; pray grant me this obliging pardon.

Lucilia. Lead me home.

SCENE IV

Marinetta, Gros-Renard.

Marinetta. Oh! cowardly creature!

Gros-Renard. Oh! weak courage!

Marinetta. I blush with indignation.

Gros-Renard. I swell with rage. Don't imagine that I'll yield thus.

Marinetta. And don't you think to find such a dupe in me.

Gros-Renard. Come on, come on, and see the effects of my wrath.

Marinetta. You mistake us for another; you have not to do with my silly mistress. Consume that fine phiz that's yet to make us in love with his hide! Should I be in love with that puppy's face of thine? I hunt after thee! Faith, you shall squander away girls like us.

Gros-Renard. Ay, do you take it thus? Here, here, there's your fine gallant point, and haltpenny riband, without your seeking it in that manner. It shan't have the honour of being on my ear any more.

Marinetta. And to show thee that I despise thee, there's thy half-hundred of Paris needles which thou gavest me yesterday with so much bragging.

Gros-Renard. And take thy knife too, a thing most rich and rare; it cost thee sixpence when thou mad'st me a present of it.

Marinetta. Take thy scissors, with the brass chain.

Gros-Renard. I forgot the piece of cheese you gave me the day before yesterday, here; I would I could bring up the broth you made me eat, that I might have nothing of yours.

Marinetta. I have none of thy letters about me now, but I'll throw every one of 'em into the fire.

Gros-Renard. And do you know what I shall do with yours?

Marinetta. Take care you never come begging to me again.

Gros-Renard. To cut off every way of being reconciled, we must break a straw; a straw broken concludes an affair between people of honour. None of your sheep's eyes; I will be angry.

Marinetta. Don't ogle me; I'm too much provoked.

Gros-Renard. Here break; this is the way of never recanting again; break; do you laugh, you jade!

Marinetta. Yes, you make me laugh.

Gros-Renard. Plague take your grin! there's all my anger dulcified already. What say you to't? Shall we break, or shall we not break?

Marinetta. As you will.

Gros-Renard. As you will.

Marinetta. As you yourself will.

Gros-Renard. Can you consent never to have me love you?

Marinetta. I? what you please.

Gros-Renard. What you yourself please. Say—

Marinetta. I'll say nothing.

Gros-Renard. Nor I neither.

Marinetta. Nor I.

Gros-Renard. Faith we had better give over this grimace; shake hands, I pardon you.

Marinetta. And I forgive you.

Gros-Renard. Bless me! how I'm bewitched to her charms!

Marinetta. What a fool is Marinetta when her Gros-Renard's in the case!

ACT V

SCENE I

Mascaril. When darkness reigns through all the town, I'll get into Lucilia's chamber, quoth my master. Go quickly therefore and prepare the dark-lanthorn and necessary arms for by and by. When he said these words to me, I thought it sounded as if he had said, Go quickly and get a halter to hang thee with. But come on, master; for in the astonishment which such an order threw me into at first, I had not time to be able to answer you. But I'll talk with you now, and confound you too; therefore defend yourself well, and let us reason without noise. Would you, d'ye say, go and see Lucilia to-night? Yes, Mascaril. And what d'ye think to do? The action of a lover

who would be satisfied. The action of a man who has very little brains to go and risk his hide without any occasion. But do you know what motive induces me to this design? Lucilia is angered. Well, so much the worse for her. But love will have me go to appease her. But love is a fool, and doesn't know what he says. Will this love, pray, guard us from an enraged rival, or father, or brother? Dost thou think any of them intend to do us mischief? Yes, indeed, I do think so; and especially this rival. Whatever happens, Mascalil, what I trust to is, that we shall go well armed, and if anybody quarrels with us we must have a skirmish. Ay, but that's what your footman doesn't in the least pretend to. I skirmish! Lord! Am I a Roland, master, or some Ferragus. You know me little. When I consider, I who am so dear to myself, that two fingers' breadth of cold iron in this body would be enough to send a poor mortal to his grave; I am disgusted with this strange method; but thou shalt be armed cap-à-pie. So much the worse, I shall be less nimble to get into the wood; and besides, there's no armour so well joined, which a villainous point mayn't slip into. Oh! at this rate thou'l be posted for a coward. With all my heart, provided I can but always move my chin. At table you may count me for four, if you will; but you must count me for nothing, when fighting's in the case. In short, if the other world has charms for you; for my part I think the air of this very sweet. I am not very hungry after death or wounds, and you shall play the fool alone, I assure you.

SCENE II

Valere, Mascalil.

Valere. I never had a more uneasy day. The sun seems to have forgot himself, and he has such a course to run yet, before he reaches his bed, that I believe he'll ne'er accomplish it. His slowness makes me mad.

Mascalil. And this eagerness is to go in the dark, to run a groping after some ugly encumbrance.—You see Lucilia is obstinate in her repulses—

Valere. Make no superfluous harangues to me now. Were I sure to meet with a hundred deadly ambuscades, yet I feel such cruel torment from her anger, that I'll either appease it, or end my fate. 'Tis a thing resolved on.

Mascaril. I approve this transport; but the mischief is, sir, that we must get in secretly.

Valere. Very well.

Mascaril. And I am afraid I shall do you some hurt.

Valere. How so?

Mascaril. I'm tormented to death with a cough, the impertinent noise of which will occasion your being discovered. Every moment——[Coughs.] You see what a punishment 'tis.

Valere. This distemper will go off, take but some juice of liquorice.

Mascaril. I don't think 'twill go off, sir. I should be overjoyed to go along with you, but I should be mortally grieved, if I should be the cause of any misfortune's happening to my dear master.

SCENE III

Valere, Rapiere, Mascaril.

Rapiere. Sir, I was just now kindly informed that Erastus is greatly enraged against you, and that Alberto talks likewise of breaking the bones of your Mascaril on account of his daughter.

Mascaril. I? I stand for nothing in all this confusion. What have I done, to have my bones broken? am I guardian then of the virginity of all the girls in the town, that I'm thus threatened? Have I any power over temptation? and can I help it, poor rascal, if their heart prompts 'em?

Valere. Oh! they'll not be so mischievous as they say; and Erastus won't have such a great bargain of us, whatever fine heat his love may have raised in him.

Rapiere. If you should have any occasion, my arm's entirely at your service, you know of old that I'm a staunch blade.

Valere. I am obliged to you, Mr. Rapiere.

Rapiere. I have likewise two friends I can give you, who are men that will draw upon all comers, and on whom you may safely rely.

Mascaril. Accept of 'em, sir.

Valere. You are too complaisant.

Rapiere. Little Giles might have likewise assisted us, if a sad accident had not taken him from us. 'Twas a great pity, sir! a man of service too! You know the trick justice served him. He died like a Cæsar, and when the executioner broke him on the wheel, he could not make him let slip a word.

Valere. Mr. Rapiere, such a man as that ought to be lamented; but as to your guard, I thank you.

Rapiere. Be it so; but be informed that he seeks you, and may prove a scurvy match for you.

Valere. And I, to show you how much I fear him, will myself, if he seeks me, offer him what he demands; and will immediately go through all the town, accompanied by him alone.

SCENE IV

Valere, Mascaril.

Mascaril. Why, sir, will you tempt Heaven! what presumption is this! Lack-a-day! you see how they threaten us. How on every side—

Valere. What are you looking at there?

Mascaril. I sinell a cudgel that way. In short, if my prudence is now to be trusted to, don't let us be so obstinate as to remain in the street; let us go and shut ourselves up.

Valere. Shut yourselves up? Darest thou, rascal, propose such a base action to me? Come along, and without more words resolve to follow me.

Mascaril. Alack, sir! my dear master, life is so sweet! one can die but once; and 'tis for such a long time—

Valere. I shall knock thee o' the head, if I hear any more. Here comes Ascanius; let's leave him; we must learn what side he'll resolve to take. However come along with me, and let us take out of the house what we shall want to fight with.

Mascaril. I have no great itching for't. Curse on love, and those cursed wenches who will be tasting it, and then look as if butter would not melt in their mouths.

SCENE V

Ascanius, Frosina.

Ascanius. Is it really true, Frosina, and don't I dream? Pray tell me the whole exactly.

Frosina. You'll know the particulars of it soon enough; be patient. These sort of accidents are commonly but too often repeated from time to time; 'tis enough for you to know that after this will which required a boy to be born to make it stand good, the last time Alberto's wife was with child she was delivered of you, and she having long before underhand concerted her design, changed you for the son of Agnes, the nosegay-woman, who gave you as her own to my mother to nurse. This

little innocent being snatched away by death, some ten months after, Alberto being absent, the fear of her husband, and maternal love gave occasion to a new stratagem. His wife then secretly took her true daughter again, you were changed into him who supplied your place, and the death of that son which was taken into your family, was disguised to Alberto for that of his daughter. Here's the mystery of your fortune cleared up, which your pretended mother has hitherto concealed. She gives reasons for it, and may have others, whereby her interests were not all yours. In short, this visit, from which I had so little hopes, has been of more service to your love than could have been imagined; this Agnes disowns you, and the revealing this secret became necessary on account of your other affair. We have both of us informed your father of it. A letter of his wife's has confirmed the whole; and pushing our point yet farther, a little good fortune being joined to our cunning, we have so well adjusted the interests of Alberto and Polidor, and unfolded the mystery to the latter so very gently, that we might not make things appear too terrible at first, and in a word to tell you all, so prudently led his mind step by step, to an accommodation, that he shows as much desire as your father to confirm the knots, which your levity tied.

Ascanius. Ah, Frosina! What joy do you lead me into, and what do I not owe to your fortunate care!

Frosina Moreover, the good man is in a humour to make himself merry, and has forbid us to say anything of it yet to his son.

SCENE VI

Polidor, Ascanius, Frosina.

Polidor. Come hither, daughter, that name is now permitted me; I know the secret which this habit concealed. You have done a bold action, wherein you have discovered so much wit and contrivance that I forgive it you, and think my son will be happy when he shall know the object of his love. You are worth a whole world, and I'll assure him so. But he's here, let us be merry upon the adventure. Go and bring all your people quickly.

Ascanius. To obey you, sir, shall be the first compliment I make you.

SCENE VII

Polidor, Valere, Mascaril.

Mascaril. [To *Valere.*] Disgraces are often revealed by Heaven. I have dreamt to-night of pearls unstrung, and broken eggs, sir; this dream casts me down.

Valere. Cowardly rascal!

Polidor. Valere, a combat's coming on wherein all your valour will be necessary to you.

Mascaril. And will nobody stir to hinder people from cutting one another's throats? For my part, I would willingly. However, sir, if any fatal accident should happen to deprive you of your son, don't accuse me for it.

Polidor. No, no, in this case I push him on myself to do what he ought.

Mascaril. Unnatural father!

Valere. This sentiment, sir, shows you to be a man of courage, and I revere you for it. I might have offended you, and am to blame to have done all this without a father's consent; but whatever displeasure my fault might give you, nature always shows itself most powerful; and you do what is truly honourable in not being willing that the passion of Erastus should provoke me more.

Polidor. They made me just now afraid of his threats; but things have since changed their face; and you'll be attacked by a stronger enemy, without being able to fly from him.

Mascaril. Is there no way of accommodation?

Valere. I fly from him? Heaven forbid! And who can this be?

Polidor. Ascanius.

Valere. Ascanius?

Polidor. Yes, you'll see him appear presently.

Valere. He, who has faithfully promised to serve me?

Polidor. Yes, 'tis he who intends to have a stroke with you; and is resolved that a single combat, in the field where honour calls you, shall determine your quarrel.

Mascaril. He's a brave man; he knows that generous hearts don't refer their quarrels to the decision of other people.

Polidor. In short, you are accused of an imposture, the resentment of which appeared to me very reasonable; so that Alberto and I have agreed that you shall give Ascanius satisfaction for this injury. But that it should be publicly, and without any delay in the formality requisite in such a case.

Valere. And has Lucilia, father, out of a hardened heart—

Polidor. Lucilia marries Erastus, and likewise condemns you; and the better to prove your story to be false, is resolved that the marriage be performed before your own eyes.

Valere. Hah! this is a piece of impudence sufficient to enrage me. She has lost then all sense, faith, conscience, and honour.

SCENE VIII

Alberto, Polidor, Lucilia, Erastus, Valere, Mascaril.

Alberto. Well! where are the combatants? they are bringing ours, have you prepared the courage of yours?

Valere. Yes, yes; here, I am ready, since you will force me to't. And if I have at all found cause to hesitate, a remainder of respect made me do it, and not the valour of the arm which opposes me. But I'm urged too far, that respect is at an end; my mind is resolved on the utmost extremity; and such a strange perfidy appears, that my love must boldly revenge itself. [To *Lucilia.*] Not that this love pretends any more to you; all its flame is resolved into the heat of wrath, and when I have made your shame public, your guilty marriage shan't in the least disturb me. Go, this proceeding, *Lucilia*, is odious. Scarce can I believe it from the report of my eyes; 'tis showing yourself an enemy to all modesty, and you ought to die for shame.

Lucilia. Such talk as this might concern me, if I had not one at hand to revenge my cause. Here comes Ascanius, he'll be able, without much trouble, to make you change your language quickly.

SCENE IX

Alberto, Polidor, Ascanius, Lucilia, Erastus, Valere, Frosina, Marinetta, Gros-Renard, Mascaril.

Valere. He shall not do it, though he joined twenty other arms to his own. I am sorry he defends a guilty sister, but since his error makes him quarrel with me, we'll give him satisfaction, and you too, my brave Amazon.

Erastus. I should have been concerned in this; but as Ascanius has taken the affair upon himself, I'll have nothing more to do with it, but leave it to him.

Valere. 'Tis well done; prudence is always seasonable; but—

Erastus. He'll give us all satisfaction upon you.

Valere. He?

Polidor. Don't deceive yourself in the affair, you don't know yet what a strange young fellow Ascanius is.

Alberto. He's now ignorant of it; but he'll make him sensible of it in a little time.

Valere. Come on then, that he may make me sensible of it now.

Marinetta. What, publicly?

Gros-Renard. That would not be decent.

Valere. Do you make a jest of me? I'll break the head of anyone that laughs. But let us see the end.

Ascanius. No, no, I'm not so mischievous as they make me; and in this adventure wherein I am interested for everyone, you'll see my weakness discovered more than anything else. Heaven who disposes of us did not give me a heart to hold out against you, but reserved it an easy conquest to you to finish the fate of Lucilia's brother. Yes, far from boasting the power of his arm, Ascanius comes to receive death from you; nay, would gladly die, if his death could conduce to your satisfaction, by giving you a wife in the presence of all this company, who cannot justly belong to anyone but you.

Valere. No, the whole world after her perfidy and impudent tricks—

Ascanius. Ah! Valere, suffer me to tell you, that the heart which is engaged to you can be accused of no crime against you; her flame is always pure, and her constancy extreme; and I take your own father himself to witness it.

Polidor. Yes, son, we have laughed enough at your fury, 'tis now time I see to undeceive you. She to whom you are bound by oath is concealed under the habit you there see. An affair of money caused this disguise in her very infancy, which deceives so many people; and love has lately caused another, which deceived you, in joining their family to ours. Don't look round upon everybody thus, I now make a serious relation to you. Yes, in a word, 'tis she, whose crafty address obtained your vows in the night under Lucilia's name, and who by this contrivance, which none apprehended, has sowed so much perplexity amongst you. But since Ascanius now gives place to Dorothea, we must see all imposture taken off of your love, and by a more sacred knot strengthen the first.

Alberto. And this is actually the single combat, which is to repair your offence with us, and which no edict has ever forbid.

Polidor. This event gives you confusion; but 'twould be in vain for you to hesitate upon it.

Valere. No, no, I would not think of guarding myself against it. If this adventure surprises me, 'tis a surprise that pleases me, and I find myself seized at once with wonder, love and delight. Is it possible that those eyes—

Alberto. That habit, dear *Valere*, won't admit of any fine speeches you may make her. Let us go and put her on another, and in the meantime you shall know the particulars of this accident.

Valere. Pardon me, *Lucilia*, if my deceived mind—

Lucilia. 'Tis an easy matter to forget that injury.

Alberto. Come, this compliment will do well at home, and we shall have leisure all of us to compliment one another.

Erastus. But in talking after this manner you don't consider that there still remains here what may cause slaughter. Our loves are indeed crowned, but who ought to possess *Marinetta* here, his *Mascaril*, or my *Gros-Renard*? This affair must be determined by bloodshed.

Mascaril. Naw, naw, my blood fits too well in my body; let him marry her in peace, 'twill be nothing to me. Considering the humour which I know my dear *Marinetta* is of, marriage won't shut the door against courtship.

Marinetta. And dost thou think I'll make thee my gallant? As for a husband, 'tis no matter, we ought to take him such as he is, one doesn't there stand so much upon ceremony; but a gallant should be well made enough to make one's mouth water.

Gros-Renard. Harkee, when marriage has joined our hides, I insist upon your being deaf to all sparks.

Mascaril. Do you think, brother, to marry her for yourself alone?

Gros-Renard. You judge right; I'll have a virtuous wife, or I'll make a blessed noise.

Mascaril. Ah! lack-a-day, you'll do as others do, and will make yourself easy. These people who are so severe and critical before matrimony, often degenerate into pacific husbands.

Marinetta. Well, well, dear husband, don't in the least fear my fidelity, flattery will do no good with me, and I'll tell you all.

Mascaril. Oh! a fine practice! a husband made a confidant.

Marinetta. Hold your tongue, knave of clubs.

Alberto. The third time, I say, let us go home to pursue freely this joyful conversation.

THE MISER
(A COMEDY)

THE MISER, a Comedy of Five Acts in Prose, acted at the Theatre of the Palace-Royal the 9th of September, 1668.

The merit of *The Miser* was forced to give way for some time to the general prejudice. The author, who was obliged to drop it the seventh time of its being performed, brought it upon the stage again in 1668. People were obliged to agree, that the actions of men in common life might be very lively painted in elegant prose, and that the constraint of versification, which sometimes heightens a thought by the happy turn it gives room for, may likewise sometimes be the occasion of losing that warmth and life which flows from the freedom of a familiar style. To say the truth, there is a continued thread of discourse dictated by nature, which is altered and weakened by the least change of words.

As soon as this prejudice was worn off, the author had justice done him. The proposal made to the miser to marry his daughter without a portion, the carrying off the casket, the passion of the old fellow when he was robbed, his mistake with regard to his daughter's lover whom he believed to be the thief that deprived him of his treasure, the equivocal meaning of the word Casket, are the principal passages that Molière has drawn from Plautus. But Plautus can only correct men who don't take advantage of the resorts that accident give them against poverty. Euclion, who was poor by birth, still passed as such, notwithstanding he had found a pot full of gold; his whole concern was to hide the treasure which his avarice would not suffer him to make use of. The French poet embraced a more enlarged and useful subject. He represented the miser under different shapes. Harpagon was not willing to appear either avaricious or rich, though he was both. The desire of keeping his wealth, by expending as little as he possibly could, is the same thing as the insatiable desire of amassing more; this stinginess made him a usurer even to his own son. He is in love through avarice, and through avarice ceases to be in love.

ACTORS

HARPAGON, *father of Cleanthes and Eliza, and in love with Mariana.*
ANSELM, *father of Valere and Mariana*
CLEANTHES, *son of Harpagon, in love with Mariana.*
ELIZA, *daughter of Harpagon.*
VALERE, *son of Anselm, in love with Eliza.*
MARIANA, *daughter to Anselm.*
FROSINA, *a woman of intrigue.*
MR. SIMON, *a broker.*
MR. JAMES, *cook and coachman to Harpagon.*
LA FLECHE, *servant to Cleanthes.*
CLAUDIA, *servant to Harpagon.*
BRINDAVOIN,
LA MERLUCHE, } *Harpagon's Lackies.*
A COMMISSARY.

SCENE: *Paris. in Harpagon's House.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Valere, Eliza.

Valere. What, my charming Eliza, grow melancholy, after the obliging assurances you were so good as to give me of your fidelity? I see you sighing, alas! in the midst of my joy! Tell me, is it through regret that you have made me happy? And do you repent that engagement which the warmth of my passion has with difficulty forced from you?

Eliza. No, Valere, 'tis not in my power to repent of anything I do for you. I find myself drawn that way by a force too enchanting, and I am not able, even to form a wish that what is done should be undone. But to say the truth, the consequence gives me some disquiet; and I am much afraid of loving you a little more than I ought to do.

Valere. Fy! Eliza. What can you fear in the kindness you bear me?

Eliza. Alas! a thousand things at a time. The resentments of a father; the reproaches of my family; the censures of the world; but above all, Valere, a change in your affection; that criminal coldness with which those of your sex most frequently requite the too warm proofs of an innocent love.

Valere. Ah! do me not that wrong, to judge of me by others. Suspect me of anything, Eliza, rather than a failure in my devoirs to you. I love you too much for that; and my affection to you shall be as lasting as my life.

Eliza. Ah! Valere, everybody talks in the same strain; all men are alike in their words; and 'tis only their actions discover 'em different.

Valere. Since our actions alone discover what we are, wait at least then, to judge of my heart by them; and don't search out crimes for me, in the unjust fears of a tormenting anticipation. Prithee don't kill me with the severe strokes of a cruel suspicion, but allow me time to convince you, by a thousand and a thousand proofs, of the sincerity of my passion.

Eliza. Alas! how easily do we suffer ourselves to be persuaded by those we love! Yes, Valere, I look upon your heart as utterly incapable of deceiving me; I believe you love me with a real passion, and that you will ever be constant to me. I would not so much as doubt of this; and all that concerns me, is an apprehension of the censures which people may pass on me.

Valere. But why this uneasiness?

Eliza. I should have nothing to fear, would all the world look upon you with the same eyes that I do; I see enough in your person to vindicate everything I do for you. My heart has your merit to plead for its defence, supported by the assistance of that gratitude with which Heaven has bound me to you. I call to mind every moment that astonishing danger which first gave rise to our mutual regard; that surprising generosity which made you risk your own life, to snatch mine from the fury of the waves; that most tender concern which you discovered after you had dragged me out of the water; the assiduous homage of that ardent love, which neither time nor difficulties could discourage, and which, making you neglect both kindred and country, detains you in this place, keeps your fortune still disguised in favour of me, and has reduced you for the sight of me, to take upon you the employment of a domestic of my father's. All this has, undoubtedly, a wonderful effect upon me, and is sufficient, in my eyes, to justify that engagement, which I prevailed upon myself to consent to: but 'tis not enough, perhaps, to justify it to others; and I am not sure they will enter into my sentiments.

Valere. Of all that you have mentioned, 'tis only by my love that I pretend to merit anything with you; and as to the scruples you have, your father himself takes but too much care to justify you to all the world; his excess of avarice, and the austere manner with which he lives with his children, might authorise things yet more strange. Pardon me, charming Eliza, that I speak of him in this manner before you; you know that on this head one can say nothing good; but in short, if I can, as I hope I shall, find my relations again, we shall have no great trouble to gain him on our side. I expect some tidings of 'em with great impatience; and if they should stay much longer, I myself will go in search of 'em.

Eliza. Ah! Valere, stir not hence, I entreat you; think only how to work yourself into my father's favour.

Valere. You see how I go about it, and the artful compliance I was forced to make use of, to introduce myself into his service;

under what mask of sympathy and similitude of sentiments with his, I disguise myself to please him; and what part I perpetually act with him in order to win his heart. I succeed in this affair to admiration, and find that to be in the good graces of men, there's not a better way than to dress yourself out to their view, in their own inclinations, and to give into their maxims, to praise their foibles, and applaud everything they do. There's no need at all to fear overcharging our complaisance; no matter whether the manner in which we play upon them be visible, your slyest people are always grand dupes on the side of flattery; and there's nothing so impudent and so ridiculous which we mayn't bring them to swallow, when we season it with praise. Sincerity suffers a little by the trade I follow. But when we have need of men, we may reasonably be allowed to suit ourselves to their taste; and since we have no other way, but this, to compass them, 'tis not the fault of those who flatter, but of those who will be flattered.

Eliza. But why don't you endeavour also to gain my brother for a support, in case the servant should take it into her head to betray our secret?

Valere. There is no managing them both at once; the temper of the father, and that of the son, are things so opposite, that it is difficult to reconcile a confidence with both at the same time. But you, on your part, will please to transact the business with your brother, and take the advantage of the friendship there is betwixt you two, to bring him over to our interests. Here he comes. I'll step aside. Lay hold of this opportunity of breaking it to him; and let him no farther into our affair than you shall think advisable.

Eliza. I don't know whether I shall have the power to lay myself thus open to him.

SCENE II

Cleanthes, Eliza.

Cleanthes. I am very glad to find you alone, sister; and I was impatient to speak with you, to impart a certain secret to you.

Eliza. Here I am, brother, ready to give you the hearing. What is't you have to say to me?

Cleanthes. A world of things, sister, comprehended in one word.—I am in love.

Eliza. In love?

Cleanthes. Yes, in love: but, before I go any further, I know that I depend on a father, and that the name of son subjects me to his pleasure; that we ought not to engage ourselves, without the consent of those who gave us birth; that Heaven has made them masters of our vows; and that we are enjoined not to dispose of ourselves, but by their direction. That they, not being under the prejudice of a foolish passion, are in a condition of being imposed upon, much less than we; and of seeing better what is proper for us; that we ought rather to trust to the eyes of their prudence, than to the blindness of our passion; and that the heat of youth very often draws us upon dangerous precipices. I say all this to you, sister, that you should not give yourself the trouble of saying it to me; for in short, my love will suffer me to hear nothing can be said; and I beg of you not to make me any remonstrances.

Eliza. Have you engaged yourself, brother, with her you love?

Cleanthes. No, but I have determined to do it; and I conjure you once more to bring me no reasons to dissuade me from it.

Eliza. Am I, brother, so strange a person?

Cleanthes. No, sister, but you are not in love; you are ignorant of that sweet violence which the tender passion commits upon our hearts, and I am afraid of your wisdom.

Eliza. Alas! brother, not a word about my wisdom. There are no persons but are deficient that way, at least, once in their lives; and if I lay open my heart to you, I shall perhaps appear much less discreet in your eyes than yourself.

Cleanthes. Ah! Would Heaven your heart, like mine—

Eliza. Let us finish your affair first of all; and tell me who is the person you are in love with.

Cleanthes. A young creature who lodges of late in this neighbourhood, and who seems to be made to inspire all that behold her, with love; nature, my dear sister, has formed nothing more lovely; I was in transports from the moment I saw her. Her name is Mariana, and she lives under the direction of a good woman her mother, who is almost always sick, and for whom this dear girl entertains sentiments of friendship not to be imagined. She waits upon her, bemoans her, comforts her with a tenderness that would touch you to the very soul. She goes about everything she does with an air the most charming in the world; and there are a thousand graces shine in all her actions; a sweetness most winning, a good-nature all engaging, a modesty adorable, a—Ah! sister, I wish you had but seen her.

Eliza. I see a great deal of her, dear brother, in what you've told me; and to comprehend what she is, 'tis sufficient for me that you love her.

Cleanthes. I have learnt underhand, that they are not in extraordinary circumstances, and that their frugal management has much ado to spin out the small matter they are possessed of so as to answer all their necessities. Imagine with yourself, sister, what joy it must be to raise the fortune of a person one loves; to contribute in a handsome manner, some small relief to the modest necessities of a virtuous family; and think with yourself what grief it must be to me, to see that, by the avarice of a father, I am under an impossibility of tasting this joy, and of discovering to this fair one any testimony of my love.

Eliza. Yes, brother, I sufficiently conceive what your concern must be.

Cleanthes. Ah! sister, it is greater than one can believe. For in short, can anything be more cruel, than that rigorous close-fisted usage with which we are kept under; that strange barrenness in which we're made to starve? And what good will it do us to have means, if they don't fall to us but at a time when we are past the prime of enjoying 'em? And if I am forced, even for my necessary support, to run myself in debt with everybody about me? If you and I are reduced to hunt about daily for relief from tradesmen, to be in a capacity of clothing ourselves with common decency? In short, I wanted to speak with you, to help me sound my father upon my present sentiments; and if I find he opposes 'em, I am determined to go elsewhere, with this lovely creature, and make the best of that fortune which providence shall throw in our way. I'm ransacking high and low to borrow money with this design; and if your affairs, sister, resemble mine, and it must be so that our father opposes our inclinations, we'll e'en both leave him, and free ourselves from that tyranny in which his insupportable avarice has so long confined us.

Eliza. It is very true, he gives us every day more and more reason to regret the loss of our mother, and that—

Cleanthes. I hear his voice. Let us step at a distance a little, that we may thoroughly unbosom ourselves; and afterwards we'll join our forces, to make our attack on the ruggedness of his temper.

SCENE III

Harpagon, La Fleche.

Harpagon. Hence this moment, and let me have no more prating. March then, scamper out of my house, thou finished, sworn rascal, thou true gallows-swing'r.

La Fleche. Never did I see anything so villainous as this cursed old fellow; I'm of opinion, under correction, that he's possessed.

Harpagon. Dost mutter between thy teeth?

La Fleche. Why do you drive me out thus?

Harpagon. It well becomes thee, scoundrel, to ask me reasons, indeed; get out, quick, that I mayn't beat out thy brains.

La Fleche. What have I done to you?

Harpagon. Done this, made me resolve thou shalt be gone.

La Fleche. My master, your son, has given me orders to wait for him.

Harpagon. Go, and wait for him in the street, and not in my house, planted bolt upright like a stake, to observe what passes and make thy ends of everything. I won't have eternally before my eyes a spy upon all my affairs, a traitor, whose cursed eyes besiege all my actions, devour what I have, and ferret about in every corner to see whether there's anything to pilfer.

La Fleche. How the deuce can anyone contrive to steal from you? Are you a man to be robbed, who keep everything under lock and key, and stand sentinel day and night?

Harpagon. I will lock up everything I think proper, and stand sentinel as I please. Are not these a pretty parcel of spies upon me, who make observations upon everything one does? [Aside.] I tremble for fear he has suspected something about my money. Don't you, fellow, raise stories about that I have money hidden in my house. -

La Fleche. Have you money hidden?

Harpagon. No, rascal, I don't say so. I shall run mad. I only ask whether thou wilt not maliciously raise a report that I have.

La Fleche. Plague! What matters it to us that you have, or that you have not, since 'tis just the same thing to us?

Harpagon. Ho! You turn reasoner, do you? I'll give ye a reason in at your ears. [Lifting up his hand to give *La Fleche* a box on the ear.] Get ye hence, once more.

La Fleche. Well, I'm agoing.

Harpagon. Stay, hast thou carried nothing away from me?
La Fleche. What should I carry away from you?
Harpagon. Come hither that I may see; show me thy hands.
La Fleche. There.
Harpagon. T'other.
La Fleche. T'other?
Harpagon. Yes.
La Fleche. There.
Harpagon. Hast thou crammed nothing in here?

[*Pointing to La Fleche's breeches.*]

La Fleche. Look yourself.

Harpagon. [*Feeling the knees of his breeches.*] These wide-kneed breeches are proper receivers of stolen goods; and I wish somebody had been hanged——

La Fleche. [*Aside.*] Ah! How richly does such a fellow as this deserve what he fears! and what joy would it give me to rob him!

Harpagon. Heh?
La Fleche. What?
Harpagon. What is't you talk of robbing?
La Fleche. I say that you feel pretty well round about, to see if I have robbed you.

Harpagon. That's what I would do.

[*Feels in La Fleche's pockets.*]

La Fleche. [*Aside.*] Pox take all stinginess, and stingy curs.
Harpagon. How? What d'ye say?
La Fleche. What do I say?
Harpagon. Yes. What d'ye say of stinginess, and stingy curs?

La Fleche. I say a pox take all stinginess, and stingy curs.
Harpagon. Whom d'ye speak of?
La Fleche. Of the stingy.
Harpagon. And who are those stingy?
La Fleche. Villains, curmudgeons.
Harpagon. But who do you mean by that?
La Fleche. What is it you are uneasy about?
Harpagon. I am uneasy about what I ought to be.
La Fleche. Is it that you believe I intend to speak of you?
Harpagon. I believe what I believe; but I've a mind you should tell me whom you speak to, when you say that.
La Fleche. I speak—I speak—to my cap.
Harpagon. And I could find in my heart to speak to thy crown.

La Fleche. Will you hinder me from cursing the covetous?

Harpagon. No; but I'll hinder thee from prating, and being insolent. Hold thy tongue.

La Fleche. I name nobody.

Harpagon. A word more I'll break thy bones.

La Fleche. If the cap fits anybody, let him take it.

Harpagon. Not done yet?

La Fleche. Yes, much against my will.

Harpagon. Ha! hah!

La Fleche. [Showing him one of his waistcoat pockets.] Stay; here's one pocket more; are you satisfied?

Harpagon. Come, give it me, without the trouble of rummaging for it.

La Fleche. What?

Harpagon. What thou hast taken from me.

La Fleche. I've taken nothing at all from you.

Harpagon. Really?

La Fleche. Really.

Harpagon. Adieu then, and the d—l go with thee.

La Fleche. [Aside.] So; I am blessedly dismissed.

Harpagon. I charge it home upon thy conscience, however.

SCENE IV

Harpagon. [Alone.] There's a rascal of a valet, who is a constant vexation to me. I don't like to see such a good-for-nothing cur about me. In troth 'tis no small plague to keep a great sum of money by one; and happy is he who has all his cash at good interest, and reserves no more in his own hands than needs must for common expenses. One's not a little puzzled to find, in the whole house, a trusty hoarding-place; for your strong boxes are, to me, very suspicious places, and I would never trust 'em. I look upon 'em to be mere bait for thieves, and they are always the first thing they make an attack upon.

SCENE V

Harpagon, Eliza and Cleanthes talking together at the farther part of the stage.

Harpagon. [Thinking himself alone.] In the meanwhile I'm not sure whether I've done right in burying the ten thousand crowns in my garden, which were paid me in yesterday.—Ten thousand crowns in gold is a sum sufficiently—[Seeing the

brother and sister whispering together.] O Heavens! I have betrayed myself; my warmth transported me; I believe I spoke aloud when I was talking to myself. [To *Cleanthes* and *Eliza*.] What's the matter?

Cleanthes. Nothing, father.

Harpagon. Have you been there any time?

Eliza. We were but this moment come hither.

Harpagon. Did you overhear?—

Cleanthes. What, father?

Harpagon. What I—

Eliza. What might it be?

Harpagon. What I was just now asaying.

Cleanthes. No.

Harpagon. You did, you did.

Eliza. With submission we did not.

Harpagon. I see well enough you heard some few words. I was discoursing to myself about the difficulty, nowadays, of coming at moncy, and I was saying that, happy is he who hath ten thousand crowns in his house.

Cleanthes. We were afraid of coming up to you, for fear we should interrupt you.

Harpagon. I am very glad to acquaint you with what I said, that you might not take things the wrong way, and fancy with yourselves, I said 'twas I, who had ten thousand crowns.

Cleanthes. We don't pry into your affairs.

Harpagon. Would I had 'em, those ten thousand crowns.

Cleanthes. I don't believe—

Harpagon. 'Twould be a fine thing for me.

Eliza. These are things.—

Harpagon. I should find a use for 'em.

Cleanthes. I'm of opinion that—

Harpagon. 'Twould be of great service to me.

Eliza. You are—

Harpagon. And I should make no complaints, as I do now, that the times are hard.

Cleanthes. Bless me! father, you have no reason to complain; the world knows you have wealth sufficient.

Harpagon. How! I wealth sufficient? They that say it are liars. There's nothing more false, and they are rascals who raise all these reports.

Eliza. Don't put yourself into a passion.

Harpagon. 'Tis strange that my own children should betray me, and turn my enemies!

Cleanthes. Is it being your enemy, to tell you that you have wealth?

Harpagon. Yes: such kind of talk, and the expenses you are at, will be the occasion, one of these days, of people's coming to cut my throat, under the imagination that I am made up of nothing else but guineas.

Cleanthes. What great expense am I at?

Harpagon. What? Is there anything more scandalous than that sumptuous equipage with which you jaunt it about town? I was scolding your sister yesterday, but this is still ten times worse. It perfectly cries to Heaven for vengeance; and were one to take you from head to foot, one might find enough to purchase an handsome annuity for life. I've told you twenty times, son, that all your ways very much displease me. You give furiously into the marquis; and you must certainly rob me, to go dressed as you do.

Cleanthes. How, rob you?

Harpagon. How should I know? Where can you get where-withal to support the grandeur you live in?

Cleanthes. I, father? 'Tis by play: and as I am very lucky, I lay out all the money I win, upon my back.

Harpagon. 'Tis very ill done. If you have luck at play, you should make good use of it, and put out the money you win to honest interest, that you might find it another time. I should be glad to know, without mentioning the rest, to what purpose serve all these ribbons, with which you are so finely larded from head to foot: and whether half a dozen hooks and eyes would not be enough to fasten your breeches knees? What need is there to lay out money for perukes, when one may wear hair of one's own growth, that costs nothing? I'll hold a wager that what in peruke, and what in ribbons, there go at least twenty guineas: and twenty guineas bring in, at least one pound thirteen shillings and eleven pence farthing per annum, at only eight per cent interest.

Cleanthes. Very true.

Harpagon. No more of this, let's talk of other business. [Aside, seeing *Cleanthes* and *Eliza* making signs to one another.] Mercy on me! I believe they are making signs to one another, to pick my pocket. [Aloud.] What mean those gestures?

Eliza. We are bargaining, my brother and I, who shall speak first; and we have each of us, something to say to you.

Harpagon. And I likewise have something to say to each of you.

Cleanthes. 'Tis about marriage, father, that we have a desire to talk with you.

Harpagon. 'Tis about marriage that I want to discourse you.

Eliza. Ah! father.

Harpagon. Why that Ah? Is it the word, daughter, or the thing that frights you?

Cleanthes. Matrimony may be frightful in both respects, in the manner you may design it; and we are afraid our sentiments mayn't happen to agree with your choice.

Harpagon. A little patience. Don't fright yourselves. I know what is proper for you both; and you shall have no reason, either of you, to make complaints of anything I intend to do. [To *Cleanthes.*] And to begin at the right end. Have you seen, pray tell me, a young person whose name is Mariana, who lodges not far from this place?

Cleanthes. Yes, father.

Harpagon. And you, child?

Eliza. I've heard speak of her.

Harpagon. How do you like this girl, son?

Cleanthes. She is a very fine creature.

Harpagon. Her looks?

Cleanthes. Ingenuous and sprightly.

Harpagon. Her air and manner?

Cleanthes. Admirable, undoubtedly.

Harpagon. Don't you think that such a girl as this sufficiently deserves to be considered of?

Cleanthes. Yes, father.

Harpagon. That this would be a desirable match?

Cleanthes. Most desirable.

Harpagon. That she has all the appearance of making an excellent housewife?

Cleanthes. Without dispute.

Harpagon. And that a husband might live comfortably with her?

Cleanthes. Certainly.

Harpagon. There is a trifling difficulty in it. I am afraid she has not so much money, as one might reasonably pretend to.

Cleanthes. Oh! sir, money is no great matter, when the question is about marrying a person of virtue.

Harpagon. Pardon me, pardon me. But there is this to be said for it, that if one does not find the riches answer one's wish, one may endeavour to make it up in something else.

Cleanthes. That is to be supposed.

Harpagon. In short, I'm very glad to find you chime in with my way of thinking: for her honest deportment, and sweetness of temper have gained my heart; and I am resolved to marry her, provided I find she has something of a portion.

Cleanthes. O Heavens!

Harpagon. What now?

Cleanthes. You are resolved you say——

Harpagon. To marry Mariana.

Cleanthes. Who, you? you?

Harpagon. Yes, I, I, I. What can all this mean?

Cleanthes. A dizziness has seized me all o' the sudden, and I'll withdraw a little.

Harpagon. 'Twill be soon over. Go quickly into the kitchen, and drink a large glass of fair water.

SCENE VI

Harpagon, Eliza.

Harpagon. These are your flimsy beaux, who have no more heart than chickens. This, daughter, is what I have resolved in respect to myself. As to your brother, I have pitched upon a certain widow for him, who was spoke of to me this morning; and for thee, I'll give thee to Signor Anselm.

Eliza. To Signor Anselm?

Harpagon. Yes. A staid, prudent, and wise man, who is not above fifty years old, and is reported to be very rich.

Eliza. [Curtsying.] I have no inclination to marry, father, if you please.

Harpagon. [Curtsying again.] And I've an inclination, that my little girl, my precious should marry, if it pleases.

Eliza. [Curtsying again.] I beg your pardon, father.

Harpagon. [Curtsying again.] I beg your pardon, daughter.

Eliza. I am Signor Anselm's most humble servant. [Curtsying again.] But, with your leave, I will not marry him.

Harpagon. I am your most humble slave. [Curtsying again.] But, with your leave, you shall marry him this very night.

Eliza. This very night?

Harpagon. This very night.

Eliza. [Curtsying again.] This can't be, father.

Harpagon. [Curtsying again.] This must be, daughter.

Eliza. No.

Harpagon. Yes.

Eliza. No, I tell you.

Harpagon. Yes, I tell you.

Eliza. 'Tis a thing you shall never force me to do.

Harpagon. 'Tis a thing I will force you to do.

Eliza. I'll sooner make away with myself, than marry such a husband.

Harpagon. You shall not make away with yourself, and you shall marry him. But see what assurance is here! Did ever anybody see a daughter speak after this manner to a father?

Eliza. But did ever anybody see a father marry his daughter in this manner?

Harpagon. 'Tis a match to which there can be no objection; and I hold a wager all the world will approve my choice.

Eliza. And I'll lay that it can't be approved by any reasonable person.

Harpagon. Here comes Valere. Have you a mind that we shall make him a judge between us in this affair?

Eliza. With all my heart.

Harpagon. But will you be determined by his judgment?

Eliza. Yes. I'll stand by whatever he says.

Harpagon. 'Tis done.

SCENE VII

Valere, Harpagon, Eliza.

Harpagon. Come hither, Valere, we have pitched upon you to acquaint us who is in the right, my daughter, or I.

Valere. 'Tis you, sir, beyond all dispute.

Harpagon. Do you know very well what we are talking about?

Valere. No. But you can't be in the wrong, you are all reason.

Harpagon. I have a mind, this evening, to give her a man for a husband who is equally rich and wise; and the baggage tells me to my face, that she scorns to take him. What do you say to that?

Valere. What do I say to it?

Harpagon. Yes.

Valere. I, I—

Harpagon. What?

Valere. I say that in the main, I am of your opinion, and you can't possibly fail of being in the right. But at the same time, she is not absolutely in the wrong; and—

Harpagon. How so? Signor Anselm is a considerable

match; he is a person of quality, sweet-tempered, staid, discreet, and in great circumstances, and who has no child left by his former marriage. Could she be better fitted?

Valere. That's true. But then she might tell you, that this is hurrying matters something of the fastest; and that some time, at least, should have been given, to try whether her inclination might reconcile itself with—

Harpagon. 'Tis an opportunity which we must catch quickly by the forelock. I find an advantage here, which I should not find elsewhere; and he engages himself to take her without a portion.

Valere. Without a portion?

Harpagon. Yes.

Valere. Oh! I say not a word more. You see here is a reason absolutely convincing; you must yield to this.

Harpagon. This is a considerable saving to me.

Valere. Most certainly, this admits of no contradiction. 'Tis true, your daughter may represent to you, that marriage is a more important affair, than people are apt to conceive; that 'tis a commencing happy or unhappy for life; and that an engagement which is to last till death, should never be made without great precaution.

Harpagon. Without a portion.

Valere. You say right. That's what decides all, that's taken for granted. There are people might tell you, that, on such occasions, the inclination of a daughter is, doubtless, a thing which ought to be regarded; and that this great disparity of age, of humour, and of sentiments, makes a marriage subject to most vexatious accidents.

Harpagon. Without a portion.

Valere. Oh! there's no reply to that. We very well know it. Who the deuce can stand against it? Not but that there are many fathers who would like much better to husband well the satisfaction of their children, than the money they might give with them; who would never sacrifice them to interest, and would study above everything, to mix in a match that sweet conformity, which continually maintains the honour, tranquillity, and joy of it; and that—

Harpagon. Without a portion.

Valere. It's true. That stops every mouth; without a portion. Show me a way to withstand such an argument as that.

Harpagon. [Aside, looking towards the garden.] Bless me, I

think I hear a dog barking; is it not somebody who has a design upon my money? [To Valere.] Don't stir, I'll return in an instant.

SCENE VIII

Eliza, Valere.

Eliza. Are you in jest, Valere, to talk to him as you do?

Valere. 'Tis that I mayn't exasperate him, and may compass my end the better. Directly to fall foul on his sentiments is the way to spoil all. There are some people must be taken only the roundabout way. Tempers averse to all resistance; restive natures, that fling against truth; who always bear obstinately against the right road of reason, whom you can never bring where you would have them, but by winding 'em about. Seem to consent to what he has a mind to, you'll gain your point the better; and—

Eliza. But this marriage, Valere?

Valere. We'll study some way to break it off.

Eliza. But what invention to find, if it must be concluded this evening?

Valere. You must desire it may be delayed, and feign some disorder.

Eliza. But they'll discover the counterfeit, if they call in the physicians.

Valere. You jest sure? Do they know anything of the matter? Pooh! Pooh! You may have what distemper you please for all them; they'll find you reasons to account for the cause of it.

SCENE IX

Harpagon, Eliza, Valere.

Harpagon. [Aside, at the farther part of the stage.] 'Tis nothing, thank Heaven.

Valere. [Not seeing Harpagon.] In short, our last resort is, that flight will screen us from everything; and if your love, fair Eliza, is capable of a firmness,—[Spying Harpagon.] Yes, 'tis fitting that a daughter should be obedient to a father; she ought by no means to mind the make of a husband; and when the substantial argument of Without a Portion offers itself, she ought to be ready to take anything one will give her.

Harpagon. Good. That was admirably said.

Valere. Sir, I ask pardon, if I am a little warm, and take the liberty to talk to her in the manner I do.

Harpagon. How! I am charmed with it, and 'tis my pleasure that you take her absolutely under your power. [To *Eliza*.] Nay, it signifies nothing to run away. I give him the same authority over you that Heaven has given me, and will have you comply with everything he directs—

Valere. [To *Eliza*.] After this, resist my remonstrances.

SCENE X

Harpagon, Valere.

Valere. I'll follow her, sir, and give her more of the same lectures.

Harpagon. Do so. You'll oblige me. Verily—

Valere. 'Tis good to keep a strict hand over her.

Harpagon. That's true. We must—

Valere. Give yourself no manner of trouble, I think I shall bring it to bear.

Harpagon. Do, do. I'm going to take a short turn in the city, and shall be back again presently.

Valere. [Going towards that side of the stage where *Eliza* went off, and speaking as to her.] Yes. Money is the most valuable thing in this world; and you ought to thank Heaven for the worthy man of a father it has bestowed on you. He knows what it is to live. When a person offers to take off a daughter without a portion, one ought to look no further. Everything is included in that. And, Without a Portion, supplies the place of beauty, youth, pedigree, honour, wisdom, and probity.

Harpagon. [Alone.] Ah! brave boy! This is speaking like an oracle. Happy is he who has such a servant as this!

ACT II

SCENE I

Cleanthes, La Fleche.

Cleanthes. Hey! Mr. Rascal as you are! Where have you been thrusting in your impertinent nose? Did not I order you?—

La Fleche. Yes, sir, and I came here to attend you; but your father, a most ungracious mortal, drove me out in spite o' my teeth, and I ran the risk of being cudgelled.

Cleanthes. How goes our affair? Things are more urgent than ever; and since I left you, I have discovered that my father is my rival.

La Fleche. Your father in love?

Cleanthes. Yes; and I had all the difficulty in the world to conceal from him the disorder which this news threw me into.

La Fleche. He dabble in love-affairs! What the deuce does he think of! Has he a mind to put a joke upon the world? And was love designed for people of his make?

Cleanthes. It must needs happen, for my sins, that this passion should have got into his head.

La Fleche. But for what reason do you make a mystery to him of your being in love?

Cleanthes. To give him less suspicion, and reserve myself, in case of need, the easiest means of breaking off the match—What answer have they made you?

La Fleche. I' good troth, sir, those that borrow are in a scurvy way; one must bear with strange things when one's under necessity, as you are, of passing through the hands of a money-scrivener.

Cleanthes. Won't the job be done at all then?

La Fleche. Pardon me. Our Mr. Simon the broker, who is recommended to us as an active, stirring fellow, tells me he has left no stone unturned to serve you, and protests that your looks alone have gained his heart.

Cleanthes. I shall have the fifteen thousand livres then, that I ask?

La Fleche. Yes; but upon some trifling conditions, which it's necessary you should accept, if you design matters should do.

Cleanthes. Did he bring you to the speech of him who was to lend the money?

La Fleche. No truly, this business is not transacted after that fashion. He takes even more pains to be hid than you do, and here are mysteries much greater than you imagine. He would by no means tell me his name: and he is to be brought to an interview with you to-day at a strange house, to be informed from your own mouth, of your substance and your family; and I make no manner of doubt, but the name only of your father, will make things very easy.

Cleanthes. And chiefly my mother's being dead, whose jointure nobody can hinder me of.

La Fleche. Here are some articles which he himself dictated to our broker, to be shown you, before anything can be done.

On supposition that the lender sees all his securities good, and the borrower be of age, of a family whose estate is great, solid, and secure, clear and free from all encumbrances, a good, punctual bond shall be executed before a notary, the honestest man can possibly be had, and who, for that purpose, must be chosen by the lender, to whom it is of the greatest importance that the instrument be rightly drawn up.

Cleanthes. There's nothing to be said against this.

La Fleche. The lender, not to load his conscience with the least scruple, does not pretend to place out his money at more than eighteen per cent.

Cleanthes. At eighteen per cent! O' my soul an honest fellow! There's no room to complain of this.

La Fleche. That's true.

But as the lender aforesaid has not by him the sum under debate, and that to do the borrower a favour, he himself is necessitated to borrow of another, on the foot of five per cent, 'twill be but reasonable that the said first borrower pay that interest, without prejudice to the other, as considering it is only to oblige him that the said lender engages himself to borrow this.

Cleanthes. The devil! What a Jew! What a Turk is here? 'Tis above twenty per cent.

La Fleche. Very true; that's what I said; you had best consider on't.

Cleanthes. What wouldest thou have me consider? I want money, and I must agree to it all.

La Fleche. That very answer I made him.

Cleanthes. Is there anything more?

La Fleche. One small article only.

Of the fifteen thousand livres required, the lender will not be able to pay in cash more than twelve thousand; and as to the thousand crowns remaining, the borrower must take 'em out in household stuff, furniture, and trinkets; of which follows the inventory, and which the said lender has honestly put at the most moderate price he possibly could.

Cleanthes. What means all this?

La Fleche. Hear the inventory:

Imprimis: One standing bed, with lace of point of Hungary, handsomely sewed upon an olive-coloured cloth; with six

chairs, and a counterpane of the same, all in good condition, and lined with a changeable taffety, red and blue.

Item: One tent-bed, of a good dry rose-coloured serge, with the fringes of silk.

Cleanthes. What would he have me do with this?

La Fleche. Hold.

Item: One suit of tapestry hangings, being the amours of Gombaut and Macæa.

Item: One large walnut-tree table, with twelve columns, or turned pillars, drawing out at each end, and fitted up with its half-dozen joint-stools under it.

Cleanthes. 'Sdeath what have I to do—

La Fleche. Have patience.

Item: Three large muskets inlaid with mother o' pearl, with the rests suited to 'em.

Item: One brick furnace, with two retorts, and three recipients, very useful for those who are curious in distillations.

Cleanthes. I shall go mad.

La Fleche. Gently.

Item: One Bolognia lute, with its complement of strings, or but few wanting.

Item: One fox and goose table, one chess board, with the play of the goose, restored from the Greeks, very proper to pass away the time, when one has nothing to do.

Item: One lizard skin, three feet and a half, stuffed with hay; a pretty curiosity to hang up at the ceiling of a chamber.

The total above mentioned being honestly worth four thousand five hundred livres, is reduced, by the moderation of the lender, to the value of a thousand crowns.

Cleanthes. A plague choke him with his moderation, for a scoundrel and cut-throat rascal as he is! Was there ever such extortion heard of? And he is not satisfied with the cruel interest he demands, but he must still force me to take the beggarly old lumber he has heaped together, at the rate of three thousand livres? I shan't make two hundred crowns of the whole; and yet for all this, I must e'en resolve to agree to his terms; for he is in a condition to make me accept anything; the villain has me at his mercy.

La Fleche. Sir, without offence, you are exactly in the high road which Panurge took to be ruined; getting money advanced, buying dear, selling cheap, and eating your corn in the blade.

Cleanthes. What wouldst thou have me do? See what young fellows are reduced to by the cursed avarice of fathers! Can one be astonished, after this, that their children wish 'em dead?

La Fleche. I must confess that yours would incense the calmest man in the world against his villainy. I have not, Heaven be praised, inclinations strongly bent towards hanging; and amongst my comrades, whom I see dabbling pretty much in the small-craft way, I've dexterity to draw my neck out of the halter, and disentangle myself from all gallantries which taste ever so little of the gallows; but, to say the truth, he would even tempt me by his proceedings to rob him; and I should think, in robbing him, I did a meritorious action.

Cleanthes. Give me that inventory a little, that I may look it over again.

SCENE II

Harpagon, Mr. Simon, Cleanthes, La Fleche, at the farther part of the stage.

Mr. Simon. Yes, sir, 'tis a young man in want of money. His affairs force him to take it up, and he'll stick at nothing you prescribe him.

Harpagon. But do you believe, Mr. Simon, there's no hazard run in this case? And do you know the name, the estate and the family of him you speak for?

Mr. Simon. No, I can't well let you thoroughly into that; and it was only by chance I was directed to him; but you will be made acquainted with everything by himself; and his man assured me that you would be satisfied when you come to know him. All I can tell you, is, that his family is rich, that he has no mother, and that he will give bond, if you insist upon it, that his father shall die before eight months are over.

Harpagon. That's something, indeed. Charity, Mr. Simon, obliges us to gratify people when it is in our power.

Mr. Simon. That's to be supposed.

La Fleche. [Low to *Cleanthes*, seeing *Mr. Simon*.] What's the meaning o' this? Our Mr. Simon in discourse with your father!

Cleanthes. [Low to *La Fleche*.] Can they have informed him who I am? and dost thou betray me?

Mr. Simon. [To *La Fleche*.] Hah! you are in mighty haste!

Who told you this was the house? [To *Harpagon*.] 'Twas none of me, sir, however, who discovered to them your name and your lodging; but in my opinion there's no great harm in it; they are discreet people, and here you may explain to one another.

Harpagon. How!

Mr. Simon. [Pointing to *Cleanthes*.] This is the gentleman who'd borrow the fifteen thousand livres of you, that I was speaking of.

Harpagon. How, sirrah, is it you that abandon yourself to these culpable extremities?

Cleanthes. How, father, is it you that descend to these base actions?

[*Mr. Simon makes off, and La Fleche goes to hide himself*.]

SCENE III

Harpagon, Cleanthes.

Harpagon. Is it you who would ruin yourself, by such rascally borrowings?

Cleanthes. Is it you who seek to enrich yourself by such villainous usury?

Harpagon. Darest thou, after this, appear before me?

Cleanthes. Dare you, after this, show yourself to the world?

Harpagon. Are you not ashamed, pray, to descend to these debaucheries? To run headlong into horrible expenses, and scandalously squander that substance, which your ancestors have amassed for you with the sweat of their brows?

Cleanthes. Don't you blush to disgrace your rank by the trade you drive? To sacrifice honour and reputation to the insatiable desire of heaping crown upon crown, and to outdo, in point of interest, the most infamous subtleties that ever were invented by the most notorious usurers?

Harpagon. Begone out o' my sight, rascal, begone out o' my sight.

Cleanthes. Who, think you, is the greater criminal, he who hires the money he really wants, or he, forsooth, who pilfers the money he has no manner of use for?

Harpagon. Hence, I say, and don't torment my ears—
[Exit *Cleanthes*.] I'm not at all sorry for this adventure, 'twill be a warning to me, to keep a stricter eye than ever upon all his actions

SCENE IV

*Frosina, Harpagon.**Frosina.* Sir.*Harpagon.* Stay a moment, I'll come back and talk with you presently.—[Aside.] It's proper I should make a short trip to my money.

SCENE V

*La Fleche, Frosina.**La Fleche.* [Not seeing *Frosina*.] The adventure is droll to the last degree. He must certainly have a large magazine of goods, in one place or other; for there's not one thing in the inventory ever came to our knowledge.*Frosina.* [Seeing him.] Ha! Is it you, my poor *La Fleche*! How happens this meeting?*La Fleche.* Hah! hah! Is it you, *Frosina*! What have you to do here?*Frosina.* What I do everywhere else; to play the go-between in affairs, make myself serviceable to people, and make the best advantage I possibly can of the small talents I am possessed of. You know that in this world we must live by address, and that Heaven has given no other income but intrigue, and industry to such as I am.*La Fleche.* Have you any business with the master of this house?*Frosina.* Yes, I'm transacting a small affair for him, for which I expect a reward.*La Fleche.* From him? Ay, faith, you'll be very subtle if you extract anything from thence; and I must tell you that money is wondrous scarce in this house.*Frosina.* There are certain services which are marvellously engaging.*La Fleche.* I'm your most obedient; and you don't as yet know Signor *Harpagon*. Signor *Harpagon* is a human creature, of all human creatures the least humane; a mortal, of all mortals the hardest, and most close-fisted. There's no service can push his gratitude to the extremity of unclenching his hands. Of praise, esteem, kindness in words, and friendship as much as you please; but of money, not a sou. There's nothing more dry and withered than his favours and caresses; and *give* is a word for which he has conceived so strong an aversion, that he

never says, I *give you* a good-morrow, but I *lend you* a good morrow.

Frosina. I'gad I've the art of milking men. I've the secret of introducing myself into their affections; of tickling their hearts, to find on which side they are the most sensible.

La Fleche. All stuff here! I defy you to melt the man we're speaking of, on the side of money. He is a Turk on that head, but of a disposition so Turkish, as to make all the world despair; you may burst him before ye can move him; in a word, he loves money more than reputation, honour, and virtue, and the sight of a person who has any demands upon him, throws him into convulsions; this wounds him in the mortal part, pierces him to the heart, tears out his very entrails; and if——but he returns; I must be gone. [Exit *La Fleche.*]

SCENE VI

Harpagon, Frosina.

Harpagon. [Aside.] Everything is as it should be.—[Aloud.] Well, what's the business, *Frosina*?

Frosina. Bless me! What a constitution is there! Why, you are the very picture of health.

Harpagon. Who, I?

Frosina. Never did I see you look so fresh and jolly.

Harpagon. Indeed?

Frosina. How indeed? You were never so young in your life as you are now. I see fellows of five and twenty, who are older than you.

Harpagon. For all that, *Frosina*, I am some threescore good.

Frosina. Well, what's that? Threescore! Here's a pother indeed! 'Tis the very flower of one's age, and you are now entering upon the prime season of man.

Harpagon. 'Tis true; but twenty years less, though, would do me no harm, I believe.

Frosina. You joke sure. You've no need on't, you're tempered to last a hundred years.

Harpagon. Do you think so?

Frosina. Most certainly; you have all the marks of it. Stay a little. Ha! There's a token for you of long life, just between your two eyes.

Harpagon. Are you skilled that way?

Frosina. Certainly. Show me your hand. Mercy o' me, what a line of life's there!

Harpagon. What mean ye?

Frosina. Don't you see what a vast way that line goes?

Harpagon. Well; what does that signify?

Frosina. O' my conscience, I said a hundred years, but you'll weather above six score.

Harpagon. Is't possible?

Frosina. You must be knocked o' the head, I tell you. You'll live to bury your children, and your children's children.

Harpagon. So much the better. How goes our affair?

Frosina. Need you ask? Does anybody see me meddle with a thing I don't bring to bear? I've above all, a wondrous talent at match-making. There an't two people in the world that I can't find ways and means to couple in a trice; and I believe if I once took it into my head, I could marry the great Turk with the republic of Venice—but there was not, be sure, such great difficulty in this affair. As I'm very intimate with them, I've had deep discourse with 'em both about you. I told the mother the design you had upon Mariana, having seen her pass along the street, and taking the air at her window.

Harpagon. Who made answer—

Frosina. She received the proposal with joy; and when I assured her, that you were very desirous her daughter should assist this evening at the marriage contract, which is to be signed in relation to yours, she readily consented to it, and for this purpose has trusted her to my care.

Harpagon. The thing is, Frosina, that I'm obliged to give Signor Anselm a supper; and I should be glad she'd partake of the treat.

Frosina. You're in the right on't. After dinner she'll pay your daughter a visit, from whence she intends to take a turn to the fair, and so return to supper.

Harpagon. Very well, they shall go together in my coach which I'll lend 'em.

Frosina. That will suit her exactly.

Harpagon. But, Frosina, hast thou talked to the mother about the portion she can give her daughter? Have you told her she must give some assistance herself, that she must strive a little, and bleed upon such an occasion as this? For I tell you again, nobody marries a girl except she brings something with her.

Frosina. How something? She's one will bring you in a clear thousand pounds per annum.

Harpagon. A thousand pounds per annum?

Frosina. Yes. Imprimis: She has been nursed, and reared in great scantiness of feeding. She's a girl has been used to live upon salad, milk, cheese, and apples; and consequently there will be no need, on her account, of a table well served up, nor your exquisite jellies, nor your peeled barley at every turn, nor any other delicacies that another woman must have; and this is not such a trifling matter, but it will amount to two hundred pounds per annum, at least. Item: She has no curiosity for anything beyond decency with great plainness, and loves none of your magnificent dresses, nor rich jewels, nor sumptuous furniture, which such persons as she run into with so great eagerness; and this article is worth more than three hundred pounds a year. Item: She has a horrible aversion to play, which is not common with the ladies nowadays; and I know one of 'em in our neighbourhood who has lost two thousand pounds this year. But let's only take one-fourth of that; five hundred pounds, and three hundred pounds, in clothes and jewels, that makes eight hundred pounds; and two hundred pounds which we reckon for eating, is not there your thousand pounds a year, hard money?

Harpagon. Yes, that's not amiss; but this computation has nothing real in it.

Frosina. Excuse me. Is it nothing real, to bring you in marriage great sobriety; the paternal estate of a great love for simplicity of dress, and an acquired estate of great hatred of play?

Harpagon. 'Tis mere jest, to pretend to make me up her portion out of all the expenses she won't put me to; I shan't go to give an acquaintance for what I've never received; I must absolutely have the feeling of something.

Frosina. Lack-a-day! You shall feel enough. I have heard 'em talk of a certain country where they have effects, of which you will be master.

Harpagon. I must see that. But, Frosina, there is one thing more which gives me uneasiness. The girl is young, as you may see; young people generally love none but those like themselves, and covet only such company. I'm afraid a man of my age will not hit her taste; and that this may produce some little disorders in my family, that would not by any means be agreeable to me.

Frosina. How little do you know her! This is another particularity in her which I was to acquaint you with; she has

a terrible aversion to all young folks, and loves none but your old gentry.

Harpagon. She!

Frosina. Yes, she. I wish you had heard her but talk upon this head. She can't bear the sight of a young fellow at all. But she is never more ravished, she says, than when she can get sight of a fine old man with a venerable beard; the oldest have, with her, the greatest charms, and I warn you not to go make yourself younger than you are; she would have a man sixty at the least; and 'tis not four months ago, that, being upon the point of marriage, she broke the match sheer off, on account of her spark's having discovered that he was only fifty-six years of age, and used not spectacles to sign the contract.

Harpagon. Only on that account?

Frosina. Yes. She says fifty-six years will not satisfy her; and that, of all things, she's for a nose that wears spectacles.

Harpagon. Verily, you tell me something altogether new.

Frosina. This matter is carried farther than one can express. One sees several pictures and prints in her chamber. But what would you imagine they are? Your Adonis's? Your Cephalus's? Your Paris's? And your Apollo's? No. Your handsome portraits of Saturn, of King Priam, of old Nestor, and good Sire Anchises upon his son's shoulders.

Harpagon. That's admirable! This is what I should never have dreamt of; and I'm not a little pleased to find she's of this humour. In truth, had I been a woman, I should never have loved young fellows.

Frosina. I verily believe it. Pretty sort o' trumpery indeed, your young fellows, to be in love with! These pretty boys with bibs, these fine sparks that are to be admired for their complexion! I should be very glad to know what relish there is in one of 'em.

Harpagon. For my part, I can't comprehend it, and I can't imagine how it is, that there are women who are so fond of 'em.

Frosina. They must be stark fools. To think youth amiable! Have people common sense that do it? Are they men, these same young beaux? And can people be tied to such animals as these?

Harpagon. That's what I always say, with their effeminate voice, and their three little bits of a beard turned up like a cat's whiskers, their toupee wigs, their flowing breeches, and their breasts open.

Frosina. They are finely made, truly, when compared with

a person like yourself! There's something like a man! There's what will gratify the eye! This is the make and dress to inspire love.

Harpagon. Do you think me tolerably to pass?

Frosina. Do I? You are ravishing, and your picture ought to be drawn. Turn a little if you please; it is impossible to be better—let me see you walk. Here's a body, tall, free, and degagee as it ought to be, and that discovers not the least imperfection.

Harpagon. I have no great ones, thank heaven. There's only my catarrh that seizes me from time to time.

Frosina. That's nothing at all. Your catarrh by no means fits ill upon you; and you cough with a grace.

Harpagon. Tell me a little. Has not Mariana seen me yet? Has she not minded me as I passed by?

Frosina. No, no. But we'd a great deal of discourse about your person. And I was not wanting in setting forth your merit, and the advantage it would be to her, to have such a one as you.

Harpagon. You did mighty well, and I thank you for it.

Frosina. But, sir, I have a small request to make to you.—I have a lawsuit, that I'm in great danger of losing for want of a little money. [*Harpagon looks grave.*] And you could easily gain me this suit, had you the least kindness for me.—You can't think the pleasure she'll have to see you! [*He resumes a gay air.*] How you will please her! What an admirable effect will that antique ruff of yours have upon her fancy! But of all things she'll be charmed with your breeches tagged to your doublet with hooks and eyes. That makes her downright dote on you. A hook-and-eye lover will be a most wonderful regale for her.

Harpagon. Troth, you put me in raptures by this talk.

Frosina. Really, sir, this lawsuit is absolutely of the last consequence to me. [*Harpagon looks grave again.*] I'm undone if I lose it; and some small assistance would retrieve my affairs.—I would you had but seen the rapture she was in to hear me speak of you. [*Harpagon looks gay again.*] Joy sparkled in her eyes at the recital of your good qualities; and I threw her, in short, into the utmost impatience, to see this match fully concluded.

Harpagon. Thou hast done me an exceeding kind office, Frosina; and I confess I have all the obligations in the world to thee.

Frosina. I beseech you, sir, grant me the small assistance I request of you. [Harpagon looks serious.] 'Twill set me on my legs again, and I should be eternally obliged to you for it.

Harpagon. Adieu. I'll go finish my dispatches.

Frosina. I do assure you, sir, you can never relieve me in a greater necessity.

Harpagon. I'll give orders for my coach to be ready to carry you to the fair.

Frosina. I would not importune you thus, were I not forced to it by necessity.

Harpagon. And I'll take care you shall sup early, that you mayn't be sick after it.

Frosina. Don't refuse me the favour I solicit from you. You can't imagine, sir, the pleasure that—

Harpagon. I must begone. There they call me. Farewell, till by and by.

Frosina. [Alone.] A plague on thee, the de'il take thee for a covetous cur. The hunks was proof against all my attacks: but I must not quit this business however; for I've t'other side let what will happen, whence I'm sure of getting a good reward.

ACT III

SCENE I

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Elisa, Valere, Dame Claude with a broom in her hand. Mr. James, Brindavoine, La Merluche.

Harpagon. Here, come hither all of you, that I may distribute to you the orders of the day, and regulate your several employments. A little nearer, Dame Claude. To begin with you. Good, you are ready armed there. The care of cleaning out everything I commit to you: and above all, take care not to rub the furniture too hard, for fear of wearing it out. Furthermore, I assign to you the government of the bottles, during supper: and if anyone is missing, or anything is broken, I shall look to you for it, and abate it out of your wages.

Mr. James. [Aside.] A politic punishment.

Harpagon. [To Dame Claude.] Go.

SCENE II

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Eliza, Valere, Mr. James, Brindavoine, La Merluche.

Harpagon. You Brindavoine, and you Merluche, I confirm you in the charge of rinsing the glasses, and serving the wine; but only when one is thirsty, and not in the manner of some o' your impudent footmen who must provoke people, and put it in their heads to drink, when they don't dream on't. Wait till they call for it again and again, and remember always to mix a great deal of water with it.

Mr. James. [Aside.] Yes, for all wine gets into the head.

La Merluche. Shall we throw off our canvas frocks, sir?

Harpagon. Yes, when you see the guests coming; and take special care not to spoil your clothes.

Brindavoine. You very well know, sir, that one of the fore-flaps of my doublet is covered with one great blotch of lamp-oil.

La Merluche. And I, sir, have my breeches so slit behind, that saving your presence, one may see my—

Harpagon. Peace, turn that side dexterously towards the wall, and always show your fore-part to the world. [*Harpagon holds his hat before his doublet, to show Brindavoine how he should hide the blotch of oil.*] And you, always hold your hat in this fashion, when you serve at table.

SCENE III

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Eliza, Valere, Mr. James.

Harpagon. As for you, daughter, you'll have an eye upon what is taken away, and take care there be no manner of waste. That's very becoming young women. But in the meantime prepare yourself to receive my mistress handsomely, who is to pay you a visit, and attend her to the fair. Do you hear what I say to you?

Eliza. Yes, father.

SCENE IV

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Valere, Mr. James.

Harpagon. And you my fop of a son, whom I was so good as to forgive the late story; don't you go take it into your head no more than she, to make sour faces.

Cleanthes. I sour faces, father; and for what reason?

Harpagon. Come, come, we know the skit of children, whose

fathers marry again; and with what eye they use to look upon what they call a mother-in-law. But if you wish I should lose all remembrance of your last prank, I recommend to you above all things, the entertaining this same person with a cheerful countenance, and to give her in short, the handsomest reception you possibly can.

Cleanthes. To tell you the truth, father, I can by no means promise you to be well pleased, she should become my mother-in-law. I should lie, if I told you so: but as for what concerns the receiving her handsomely, and looking upon her cheerfully, I do promise upon that head most punctually to obey you.

Harpagon. Take care o' that, at least.

Cleanthes. You shall see, you shan't have the least reason to complain of that.

Harpagon. You will do wisely.

SCENE V

Harpagon, Valere, Mr. James.

Harpagon. Valere, your assistance in this business.—So ho! Master James, come hither, I reserved you for the last.

Mr. James. Is it your coachman, sir, or belike your cook you would speak to? For I am both one and t'other.

Harpagon. "Tis to both of 'em.

Mr. James. But to which of 'em first?

Harpagon. To the cook.

Mr. James. Stay then, if you please.

[*Takes off his coachman's long greatcoat, and appears dressed as a cook.*]

Harpagon. What the deuce o' ceremony's this?

Mr. James. You've nothing to do but say on.

Harpagon. I've engaged myself, Master James, to give a supper to-night.

Mr. James. [Aside.] Most miraculous!

Harpagon. Tell me now, will you give us good cheer?

Mr. James. Yes, if you'll give me a good deal of money.

Harpagon. What a pox! always money! I think they have nothing else to say; money, money, money. Not a word else in their mouth but money. Always talking of money! The burden of the song is money.

Valere. I never heard an answer more impertinent than that. A pretty sort o' rarity, to make good cheer with a good deal of money? 'Tis the easiest thing in the world; and any poor con-

triver would do full as much; but to act like a man of skill, you must tell me of making good cheer with little money.

Mr. James. Good cheer with little money?

Valere. Yes.

Mr. James. [To *Valere.*] I' good troth, Mr. Steward, you'll oblige us by letting us into this secret, and taking my place of cook! You are so meddlesome here to make yourself the factotum.

Harpagon. Hold your tongue. What must we have?

Mr. James. There's Mr. Steward, sir, will make you good cheer for a little money.

Harpagon. Heh! 'Tis my pleasure that you answer me.

Mr. James. How many will there be of you at table?

Harpagon. We shall be eight or ten: but you need only take 'em at eight. When there's victuals enough for eight, there's enough in reason for ten.

Valere. That's to be supposed.

Mr. James. Well then, we must have four large soups, and five small dishes between. Soups—small dishes—

Harpagon. S'heart, here's enough to treat a whole town from one end to th'other.

Mr. James. Roast meat—

Harpagon. [Clapping his hand on his mouth.] Ha! traitor, thou art eating up all I'm worth.

Mr. James. Intermesses—

Harpagon. What, again?

[Clapping his hand again upon his mouth.]

Valere. [To *Mr. James.*] Have you a mind to burst 'em all, and has my master invited people to murder 'em by mere force of cramming? Go, go and read a little the rules of health; ask the physicians whether there is anything so prejudicial to men, as eating to excess.

Harpagon. He's in the right.

Valere. Learn, Master James, you, and such as you, that a table overcharged with victuals is a cut-throat; that to show ourselves true friends of those we invite, 'tis necessary frugality should reign through the whole repast; and that according to the saying of one of the ancients, "We must eat to live, and not live to eat."

Harpagon. Ah! 'twas excellently said! Come, and let me hug thee for that word. It is one of the finest sentences I ever heard in my life. We must live to eat, and not eat to li— No, that is not it. How was it you said?

Valere. That we must eat to live, and not live to eat.

Harpagon. [To Mr. James.] Right! [To *Valere.*] Harkee, who is the great man who said that?

Valere. I don't recall his name at present.

Harpagon. Remember to write out those words for me; I'll have 'em graved in letters of gold over my hall chimney.

Valere. I won't fail. And as to your supper, you need only leave it to me. I'll order all that matter just as it should be.

Harpagon. Do then.

Mr. James. So much the better; I shall have the less trouble about it.

Harpagon. [To *Valere.*] There must be such things as people can't eat much of, and that cloy them immediately; sonic good pease-porridge pretty fat, with a pie in a pot well garnished with chestnuts, a——let there be abundance of that.

Valere. Trust you to me.

Harpagon. Now, Mr. James, you must go clean my coach.

Mr. James. Hold. This is directed to the coachman. [He puts on his coachman's greatcoat.] You say——

Harpagon. That you must clean my coach, and get my horses ready to drive to the fair with——

Mr. James. Your horses, sir? troth they're not in a condition for stirring anywhere. I won't tell you that they are down on their litter, for the poor beasts have none to lie upon, and it were an improper way of speaking: but you make 'em keep such austere fasts, that they are nothing but phantoms, or shadows of horses.

Harpagon. They're mighty ill indeed; they do nothing.

Mr. James. And because they do nothing, sir, must they eat nothing? 'Twould be much better for 'em, poor souls, to work a great deal, and eat accordingly. It breaks my very heart to see them grown so thin; for in short, I have a tender affection for my horses, that, methinks, when I see them suffer, 'tis my own self; not a day passes but I take the meat out of my own mouth to feed them; and 'tis a barbarous temper, sir, to have no compassion on our neighbour.

Harpagon. 'Twill be no great labour, just to go to the fair.

Mr. James. No, sir, I ha'n't the heart to drive them, 'twould go against my conscience to give 'em a lash with the whip, in the condition they are. How would you have them drag the coach, when they can't drag 'emselves along?

Valere. Sir, I'll oblige our neighbour le Picard to take upon

him to drive them. He'll be of great use to us, besides, in getting ready the supper.

Mr. James. With all my heart. I'd much rather too they should die under the hand of another, than under mine.

Valere. Master James mightily affects being considerate.

Mr. James. Mr. Steward mightily affects being necessary.

Harpagon. Ha' done.

Mr. James. Sir, I can't endure flatterers; and I see that all he does, his perpetual prying into the bread and wine, the wood, the salt and candle, is for nothing but to curry favour with you, and make his court to you. This makes me mad; and I am grieved to hear daily what people say of you; for in short I find I have a great kindness for you, in spite of me; and, next to my horses, you are the person I love most.

Harpagon. Might I know of you, Mr. James, what 'tis people say of me?

Mr. James. Yes, sir, if I were but sure it would not anger you.

Harpagon. No, not in the least.

Mr. James. Excuse me; I know very well I should put you in a passion.

Harpagon. Not at all; on the contrary it will oblige me; and I'm glad to hear what the world says of me.

Mr. James. Sir, since you will have it, I tell you frankly, that people everywhere make a jest of you; that they pelt us with a thousand jokes from every quarter, on your account; that they are never more delighted than when they have caught you at an advantage, and make stories without end of your sordid tricks. One says, you have almanacks printed on purpose, wherein you double the ember weeks, and vigils, to take advantage of the fasts you oblige your folks to. Another, that you have a quarrel always ready to pick with your servants at quarter-days, or when they leave you, to find a pretence to give 'em nothing. There, one tells a story, that once upon a time you ordered a cat of one of your neighbours, to be cited *coram nobis*, for having eat up the remains of a leg o' mutton. Here another, that you were caught one night astealing, your own self, your horses' oats, and that your coachman, who was my predecessor, gave you, in the dark, I don't know how many thwacks of a cudgel, of which you were not pleased to make one word of mention. In short, would you have me speak out? One can go to no place where one does not hear people play you off. You are the town-talk, the laughing-stock of all the world,

and one never hears you spoken of, but under the names of miser, curmudgeon, niggard, and extortioner.

Harpagon. [Beating him.] You're a numscull, a rascal, a scoundrel, and an impudent puppy.

Mr. James. Mighty well; did I not guess how 'twould be? You would not believe me. I told you plainly that I should put you in a passion by telling you the truth.

Harpagon. Learn then how to speak.

SCENE VI

Mr. James, Valere.

Valere. [Laughing.] As far as I can see, Master James, they reward your frankness but scurvyly.

Mr. James. S'death, Mr. Upstart, who affect the man of consequence, 'tis none o' your business; laugh at your own cudgelling when you get it, and don't come here to laugh at mine.

Valere. Dear Mr. Master James, don't put yourself in a passion, I beseech you.

Mr. James. [Aside.] He sneaks; I'll pretend to be valiant, and if he's fool enough to be afraid of me, I'll drub him a little. [Aloud.] Do you know very well, Mr. Grinner, that I don't laugh myself; and that if you provoke me, I shall make you laugh in another manner.

[*Mr. James pushes Valere to the farther end of the stage, threatening him.*

Valere. Gently!

Mr. James. How, gently? Suppose I've no mind to't?

Valere. Good sir!

Mr. James. You're an impudent fellow.

Valere. Mr. Master James.

Mr. James. There's no such person as Mr. Master James twice over. If I take a stick to ye, I shall tan your hide, with your importance.

Valere. How, a stick! [*Valere driving him back.*

Mr. James. Hay! no, I'm not speaking of that.

Valere. Do you know, Mr. Numscull, that I can tan your hide?

Mr. James. I don't doubt it.

Valere. That, when all's done and said, you are nothing but a scrub of a cook?

Mr. James. I know it very well.

Valere. And that you don't know me as yet?

Mr. James. Pardon me.

Valere. You will tan my hide, you said?

Mr. James. I spoke it in jest.

Valere. And I've no manner o' relish for your jesting.
[Cudgels him.] Know that you are but a scurvy joker.

Mr. James. [Alone.] Plague o' sincerity, 'tis a wretched trade. Henceforward I renounce it, and will speak truth no more. Then, as to my master, let it pass, he has some right to beat me. But for this Mr. Steward, I'll be revenged on him, if I can.

SCENE VII

Frosina, Mariana, Mr. James.

Frosina. Do you know, Mr. James, whether your master is within?

Mr. James. Yes, troth, he is; I know it but too well.

Frosina. Tell him, pray, that we are here.

SCENE VIII

Mariana, Frosina.

Mariana. Ah! Frosina, what a strange way am I in! If I must speak what I feel, how terribly am I apprehensive of this interview!

Frosina. But why so! What is it disquiets you?

Mariana. Alas! Do you ask it? And can't you imagine with yourself the alarms of a person just entering upon view of the rack on which she is to be fixed?

Frosina. I see plainly that to die agreeably, Harpagon is not the rack you would willingly embrace; and I know by your countenance, that the young spark you were speaking to me of, comes afresh into your head.

Mariana. Yes, Frosina, 'tis what I don't pretend to deny; the respectful visits he paid at our house, have made, I confess, some impression upon my mind.

Frosina. But have you learnt who he is?

Mariana. No, I don't know who he is; but I know he is formed with an air to inspire love; that if matters could be referred to my choice, I should take him before another; and that he contributes not a little to raise in me a horrible dread of the husband you would impose upon me.

Frosina. Lack-a-day, these young sparks are all agreeable enough, and play their part very well; but most of 'em are poor as rats, and it would suit you much better to take an old man,

who'll make you a good scttlement. I grant you, that the senses will not find their account quite so well on the side I speak of, and that there are certain disgusts must be endured with such a husband; but this is not to last long. And, believe me, his death will soon put you in a condition for taking one more amiable, who will make amends for all.

Mariana. Bless me, Frosina, 'tis a strange affair, when, to be happy, we must wish, or wait for somebody's death; and death will not second all the projects we're pleased to set on foot.

Frosina. You joke sure! You are not to marry him but on condition of leaving you very soon a widow; this ought to be one of the articles of the marriage contract. 'Twould be downright impertinent not to die in three months. But here he comes in his proper person.

Mariana. Ah! Frosina! what a figure is there!

SCENE IX

Harpagon, Mariana, Frosina.

Harpagon. [To *Mariana.*] Be not offended fair one, if I approach you with my spectacles on. I know that your charms strike the eye sufficiently, are visible enough of themselves, and that there is no need of glasses to discover 'em; but in short. 'tis with glasses we observe the stars; and I do maintain and uphold that you are a star, but a star, the fairest star that is in the whole country of stars.—*Frosina,* she answers not a word, nor does she discover, as I perceive, the least joy at the sight of me.

Frosina. 'Tis because she is yet all surprise. And then maids are always ashamed of declaring, at first sight, what they have in their thoughts.

Harpagon. You're right.] [To *Mariana.*] Here is my daughter, pretty dearie, come to wait upon you.

SCENE X

Harpagon, Eliza, Mariana, Frosina.

Mariana. I'm of the latest, madam, in acquitting myself of such a visit.

Eliza. You've done that, madam, which I ought to have done, and 'twas my place to have been beforehand with you.

Harpagon. You see what a great girl she is. But ill weeds always sprout up apace.

Mariana. [Aside to *Frosina*.] O the nauseous fellow!

Harpagon. [To *Frosina*.] What says my pretty one?

Frosina. That she likes you to admiration.

Harpagon. 'Tis too much honour you do me, adorable darling.

Mariana. [Aside.] What an animal!

Harpagon. I'm over obliged to you for these sentiments.

Mariana. [Aside.] I can hold no longer.

SCENE XI

*Harpagon, Mariana, Eliza, Cleanthes, Valere,
Frosina, Brindavoine.*

Harpagon. Here's my son too, who comes to pay his duty to you.

Mariana. [Aside to *Frosina*.] Ah! Frosina, what an accident! 'Tis the very person I spoke to you about.

Frosina. [To *Mariana*.] The adventure is wonderful.

Harpagon. I see you're astonished to see me have children so big. But I shall soon get rid of 'em both.

Cleanthes. [To *Mariana*.] Madam, to tell you the truth, this here is an adventure, which I by no means expected; and my father did not a little surprise me, when he told me just now the design he had formed.

Mariana. I can say the same. 'Tis an accident unforeseen, which has surprised me as much as you; and I was not prepared for such an adventure.

Cleanthes. It's true, madam, my father could not make a handsomer choice; and that the honour of seeing you is a sensible joy to me; but for all this, I will not assure you that I'm glad of the design you may have of becoming my mother-in-law. The compliment, I own to you, is too difficult for me, and this is a title, begging your pardon, which I don't wish you. This discourse will appear brutal in the eyes of certain people; but I am assured, you are one who will look on it as you should do; a marriage, madam, which you will easily imagine I ought to have an aversion to; that you are not ignorant, as knowing what I am, how much it clashes with my interest; and that, in short, you are willing I should tell you, with my father's permission, that if things depend upon me, this match should not go forward.

Harpagon. A very impertinent sort o' compliment this! What a fine confession to make the lady!

Mariana. And, for myself, in answer, I can tell you things are very even; and that if you should have an aversion to see me your mother-in-law, I should have no less, doubtless, to see you my son-in-law. Don't think, I beseech you, that the giving you this uneasiness is of my seeking. I should be very sorry to occasion you any vexation; and if I don't find myself forced by an absolute power, I give you my word, I won't consent to the match which chagrins you.

Harpagon. She's in the right on't. A silly compliment must be answered in the same way; I ask your pardon, pretty one, for the impertinence of my son; he's a young puppy who doesn't yet know the consequence of what he says.

Mariana. I give you my word that what he has said to me, has by no means been offensive to me; on the contrary he has done me a pleasure by explaining thus his real sentiments. I like a confession of this kind from him; and had he spoken in another manner, I should have esteemed him much less.

Harpagon. 'Tis great goodness in you, to be willing thus to excuse his faults. Time will make him wiser, and you will see that he'll change his sentiments.

Cleanthes. No sir, I'm not capable of changing 'em; and I most earnestly desire the lady to believe so.

Harpagon. Do but see what extravagance is here! He persists still stronger.

Cleanthes. Would you have me belie my heart?

Harpagon. Again! Have you a mind to change the discourse?

Cleanthes. Well, since you will have me talk in another strain, suffer me, madam, to put myself here in the place of my father; and let me protest to you, that I never saw anything in the world so charming as yourself; that I can conceive nothing equal to the happiness of pleasing you; and that the title of your husband is a glory, a felicity, which I would prefer to the destiny of the greatest princes upon earth. Yes, madam, the happiness of possessing you is, in my regard, the fairest of all fortunes; 'tis what I would fix my whole ambition upon. There is nothing I should not be capable of doing for so valuable a conquest, and the most powerful obstacles—

Harpagon. Softly, son, if you please.

Cleanthes. 'Tis a compliment I make the lady for you.

Harpagon. O dear! I've a tongue to explain myself, and have no need of such an interpreter, as you.—Here, bring chairs.

Frosina. No, 'twill be better for us to go directly to the fair,

that we may return the sooner, and have the whole time afterwards to entertain ourselves.

Harpagon. [To *Brindavoine.*] Put the horses to the coach then.

SCENE XII

Harpagon, Mariana, Eliza, Cleanthes, Valere, Frosina.

Harpagon. [To *Mariana.*] I beg you'll excuse me, sweet-heart, if I have not thought to give you a small collation before you set out.

Cleanthes. I have provided one, father, and have ordered hither some plates of china oranges, citrons, and sweetmeats, which I sent for on your account.

Harpagon. [Aside to *Valere.*] Valere.

Valere. [To *Harpagon.*] He's out of his wits.

Cleanthes. Don't you think this enough, father? The lady will please to be so good to excuse it.

Mariana. 'Twas not by any means necessary.

Cleanthes. Did you ev'r see, madam, a diamond more lively than that you see my father has upon his finger?

Mariana. Indeed it sparkles very much.

Cleanthes. [Taking the diamond off his father's finger, and giving it to *Mariana.*] You should look upon it a little nearer.

Mariana. It is a very fine one, indeed; it casts a great lustre.

Cleanthes. [Steps before *Mariana,* who would restore it.] No, madam, 'tis in hands too agreeable. It's a present my father makes you.

Harpagon. I?

Cleanthes. Is it not true, sir, that you've a mind the lady should keep it for your sake?

Harpagon. [Aside to his son.] How?

Cleanthes. A pretty question indeed! [To *Mariana.*] He makes signs to me that I should force you to accept it.

Mariana. I would not—

Cleanthes. [To *Mariana.*] You are in the wrong; he don't care to take it again.

Harpagon. [Aside.] I shall run mad.

Mariana. 'Twould be—

Cleanthes. [Hindering *Mariana* from returning it.] No, I tell you, it will affront him.

Mariana. Pray—

Cleanthes. By no means.

Harpagon. [Aside.] Plague take—

Cleanthes. He is perfectly shocked at your refusal.

Harpagon. [Low to his son.] Ah, traitor!

Cleanthes. [To Mariana.] You see he's beyond all patience.

Harpagon. [Aside to his son threatening him.] Villain as thou art!

Cleanthes. It is not my fault, father; I do all I can to oblige her to keep it; but she is resolute.

Harpagon. [Aside to his son in a rage.] Scoundrel!

Cleanthes. You are the cause, madam, of my father's quarrelling with me.

Harpagon. [Aside to his son with the same sour looks.] Rascal!

Cleanthes. [To Mariana.] You'll throw him into fits. For goodness sake, madam, withstand it no longer.

Frosina. [To Mariana.] Lack-a-day! What ceremony is here! Keep the ring, since the gentleman will have it so.

Mariana. [To Harpagon.] Not to put you in a passion, I shall keep it for the present, and shall take another opportunity to restore it.

SCENE XIII

*Harpagon, Mariana, Eliza, Cleanthes, Valere,
Frosina, Brindavoine.*

Brindavoine. Sir, here's a man wants to speak with you.

Harpagon. Tell him I'm busy, and bid him come again another time.

Brindavoine. He says he brings you some money.

Harpagon. [To Mariana.] I beg your pardon. I shall be back presently.

SCENE XIV

*Harpagon, Mariana, Eliza, Cleanthes, Valcre,
Frosina, La Merluche.*

La Merluche. [Comes running, and throws Harpagon down.] Sir—

Harpagon. Oh! I'm killed!

Cleanthes. What's the matter, father? Have you hurt yourself?

Harpagon. The rascal has certainly taken money of my debtors to break my neck.

Valere. [To Harpagon.] There's no harm done—

La Merluche. [To *Harpagon*.] Sir, I beg your pardon, I thought I did right to come in haste.

Harpagon. What dost thou come here for, hang-dog?

La Merluche. To tell you that both your horses are without their shoes.

Harpagon. Carry 'em to the smith then quickly.

Cleanthes. While we stay for their shoeing, I'll do the honours of the house, sir, in your place, and conduct the lady into the garden, whither I shall order the collation to be carried.

SCENE XV

Harpagon, Valere.

Harpagon. Valere, have an eye a little upon all this, and pray take care to save me as much as you can, that we may send it the tradespeople back again.

Valere. A word to the wise.

Harpagon. O rascal of a son! hast thou a mind to ruin me?

ACT IV

SCENE I

Cleanthes, Mariana, Eliza, Frosina.

Cleanthes. Let us retire hither, we shall be much better. Here's not one suspicious person now left about us, and we may speak with freedom.

Eliza. Yes, madam, my brother has disclosed to me the passion he entertains for you. I know the trouble and vexation such cross accidents as these are capable of producing; and 'tis, I assure you, with an extreme tenderness, that I interest myself in your adventure.

Mariana. It is a soothing consolation, to have such a one as you in one's interest; and I conjure you, madam, ever to cherish this generous friendship for me, so capable of alleviating the rigours of fortune.

Frosina. In troth, you are both of you unlucky mortals, in not having let me into your affairs before all this. I should certainly have warded off this perplexing business, and should not have carried matters so far as they are.

Cleanthes. What would you ha' me do? My evil destiny would have it so. But, fair Mariana, what are your resolutions?

Mariana. Alas! am I in a capacity of making resolutions? and, dependent as I am, can I form anything but wishes?

Cleanthes. Have I no support in your affections but bare wishes? No officious pity? No relieving goodness? No active affection?

Mariana. What can I say to you? Put yourself in my place, and think what I can do. Be yourself both counsellor and disposer, I refer myself to you; and I believe you more reasonable than to require anything of me, but what honour and decency will allow of.

Cleanthes. Alas! Whither do you reduce me, to refer you to what the peevish sentiments of a rigorous honour and scrupulous decency will allow.

Mariana. But what would you have me do? Though I could get over several punctilioes to which our sex is obliged, I've a regard for my mother. She has always brought me up with an extreme tenderness; I can't bring myself to determine upon what will give her any uneasiness. Treat, transact the business with her. Employ all your power to gain her over; you may do, and say everything you please, I give you liberty; and if it only sticks at my declaring in your favour, I readily consent to disclose to her my whole thoughts concerning you.

Cleanthes. Frosina, dear Frosina, would you help us out?

Frosina. In good troth, need you ask it? I'd do it with all my soul. You know I am humane enough in my natural disposition. Heaven has not made my heart of brass; I've but too much tenderness of spirit in doing little offices, when I see people love one another in good earnest, and with honour. What could we do in this case?

Cleanthes. Prithee think of it a little.

Mariana. Give us some light.

Eliza. Trump up some invention to unravel what you have done.

Frosina. [To *Mariana.*] 'Tis difficult enough. As to your mother, she's not altogether unreasonable, and possibly one might gain her, and make her resolve to transfer to the son the gift she designs for the father. [To *Cleanthes.*] But the mischief I find in it is, that your father is your father.

Cleanthes. That's true.

Frosina. I mean that he'll bear malice, if we show that we refuse him, and won't be in humour afterwards to give his

consent to your marriage. We should order it, by right, that the refusal should come from himself; and endeavour to put him out of conceit with your person.

Cleanthes. You're right.

Frosina. Yes, I'm right, that I very well know. That's what ought to be done: but the deuce and all is to find ways and means.—Stay.—Suppose we had a woman something elderly, who should have my talents, and should act a part well enough to counterfeit a lady of quality, by the help of a train made up in haste, and a whimsical name of marchioness, or viscountess, let's suppose of Lower Brittany; I should by my address work your father into a belief that she was a person very rich, having, besides houses, a hundred thousand crowns ready cash; that she was mortally in love with him, and wished to be married to him so much, as to make over all she had to him by marriage-contract. Why I don't doubt but he would lend an ear to the proposition: for in short, he loves you much, I'm sensible of it; but he loves his money a little more; and when, dazzled with this lure, he had once consented to what concerns you, it would signify little if afterwards he should be undeceived, when he came to look more narrowly into the effects of our marchioness.

Cleanthes. All this is very well contrived.

Frosina. Hold.—I just now recollect a certain acquaintance of mine will do our business.

Cleanthes. Depend upon my gratitude, Frosina, if you compass the affair: but first my charming Mariana, let us I beseech you, gain over your mother; and 'tis still doing a great deal, only to break off this marriage. I conjure you make all the efforts possible, on your part. Make use of all the power, which her fondness gives you. Display without reserve all those graces of eloquence, those all-powerful charms which Heaven has placed in your eyes and lips; and pray forget not, any of those tender expressions, those soft entreaties, and those moving caresses, to which I'm persuaded nothing can be refused.

Mariana. I'll do all I can in it, and let nothing slip me.

SCENE II

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Mariana, Eliza, Frosina.

Harpagon. [Aside and unseen.] Hey! My son kisses the hand of his intended mother-in-law, and his intended mother-in-law does not much decline it. Should there be any mystery in this?

Eliza. There comes my father.

Harpagon. The coach is quite ready; you may set out when you please.

Cleanthes. Since you don't go, I'll conduct 'em myself.

Harpagon. No, stay. They may go very well by themselves; I have occasion for you.

SCENE III

Harpagon, Cleanthes.

Harpagon. Well, setting aside the consideration of a mother-in-law, what d'ye think of this person?

Cleanthes. What do I think of her?

Harpagon. Yes, of her air, her make, her beauty, her wit?

Cleanthes. So, so.

Harpagon. But speak out.

Cleanthes. To be frank with you, I did not find her what I once thought her. Her air is quite upon the coquette, her make awkward enough, her beauty very indifferent, and her wit of the commonest kind. Don't think, father, 'tis to put you out of conceit with her: for, mother-in-law considered as mother-in-law, I like her as well as another.

Harpagon. And yet just now you told her—

Cleanthes. I did say some fine things to her in your name, but 'twas to please you.

Harpagon. So then, you should not have the least inclination for her?

Cleanthes. I? not at all.

Harpagon. I'm sorry for't; for this balks me of a thought which came into my head. I was reflecting, when I saw her here, upon my age; and was thinking with myself that people would find fault with my marrying a young girl. This consideration made me quit the design; and as I have demanded her in marriage, and am engaged to her by promise, I would have given her you, had you not discovered such an aversion to her.

Cleanthes. To me?

Harpagon. To you.

Cleanthes. In marriage?

Harpagon. In marriage.

Cleanthes. Lookee, 'tis true she's not much to my taste. But to oblige you, father, I'll determine to marry her, if you please.

Harpagon. I? I'm more reasonable than you think; I won't force your inclination.

Cleanthes. Excuse me, I'll lay this force upon myself out of respect to you.

Harpagon. No, no, marriage can never be happy where there is no inclination.

Cleanthes. That's a thing, father, which, perhaps, may come afterwards; and they say that love is often the fruit of marriage.

Harpagon. No, the affair ought not to be risked on the man's side; and there are vexatious consequences, to which I've no mind to expose you; had you in proper time, conceived the least inclination for her, I would have made you marry her, in my stead. But as this is not the case, I shall follow my first design, and marry her myself.

Cleanthes. Well, father, since matters are so, I must discover my heart to you; I must let you into this secret of ours. The truth is, I've been in love with her from the day I saw her in the park; my design was of late to have asked her of you for a wife, and nothing could have kept me from it, but the declaration of your sentiments, and the fear of displeasing you.

Harpagon. Did you visit her?

Cleanthes. Yes, father.

Harpagon. Very often?

Cleanthes. Pretty well, for the time.

Harpagon. Did they receive you well?

Cleanthes. Very well, but without knowing who I was; and that was the occasion of Mariana's surprise just now.

Harpagon. Did you declare your passion for her, and the design you had of marrying her?

Cleanthes. Most certainly; and I had even made some faint overtures to her mother.

Harpagon. Did she hearken to your proposals concerning her daughter?

Cleanthes. Yes, very civilly.

Harpagon. And did the daughter sympathise strongly with your passion?

Cleanthes. If I am to believe appearances, I persuade myself, father, that she has some kindness for me.

Harpagon. I'm very glad to have learnt a secret of this kind; this is exactly what I wanted. Harkee me, son, do you know what you've to do? You must think, if you please, of quitting your love; of giving over all pursuits after a person I design for myself; and of marrying, ere long, the person assigned you.

Cleanthes. How, father, d'ye play upon me in this manner? Well, since matters are come to that, I declare to you, that I will not quit the passion I have for Mariana; and that there is no extremity to which I will not abandon myself, to dispute that conquest with you; and that if you have the consent of a mother on your side, I shall have other succours perhaps, will fight on mine.

Harpagon. How, rascal! Have you the assurance to trespass upon my purlieus.

Cleanthes. 'Tis you who trespass upon mine, I have the prior title.

Harpagon. Am I not your father? And don't you owe me respect?

Cleanthes. These are not things in which children should be obliged to pay deference to their fathers; and love knows nobody.

Harpagon. I'll make you know me with a good cudgel.

Cleanthes. All your threatenings signify nothing.

Harpagon. Will you renounce Mariana?

Cleanthes. Upon no account.

Harpagon. A cudgel here immediately.

SCENE IV

Harpagon, Cleanthes, Mr. James.

Mr. James. Hold! hold! hold gentlemen! What's here to do? What d'ye mean?

Cleanthes. I don't value this a straw.

Mr. James. [To *Cleanthes.*] Ah! gently, sir.

Harpagon. To talk to me with this impudence!

Mr. James. [To *Harpagon.*] Ah! sir, for Heaven's sake.

Cleanthes. I won't bate you an ace.

Mr. James. [To *Cleanthes.*] What, to your father?

Harpagon. Let me do it.

Mr. James. [To *Harpagon.*] What, to your son? Once more ha' done for my sake.

Harpagon. I'll make you judge, Mr. James, in this affair, to show how much I am in the right.

Mr. James. Agreed; [To *Cleanthes.*] go farther off.

Harpagon. I've a kindness for a girl whom I have a mind to marry; and this rascal has the impudence to be in love in the same place, and to make his pretensions there in spite of my orders.

Mr. James. Ah! He's in the wrong.

Harpagon. Is't not a horrible thing, for a son to come in competition with his father? And ought he not, in duty, to abstain from touching upon my inclinations?

Mr. James. You're in the right on't. Let me speak to him, and stay you there.

Cleanthes. [To *Mr. James*, who is coming up to him] Well yes, since he will choose thee for judge, I don't refuse it; 'tis nothing to me who it is, and I'm willing too, to refer myself to you, Mr. James, concerning our difference.

Mr. James. 'Tis a great honour you do me.

Cleanthes. I am smitten with a young lady, who answers my addresses, and tenderly receives the offer of my heart; and my father takes it into his head to disturb our amour, by demanding of her for a wife.

Mr. James. He's certainly in the wrong.

Cleanthes. Is he not ashamed, at his age, to think of marrying? Does it become him to be amorous again? And ought he not to leave this business to young fellows.

Mr. James. You're in the right, 'tis a jest in him. Let me speak two words to him. [*He returns to Harpagon.*] Well, your son is not so strange a creature as you say; he submits to reason. He says he knows the respect he owes you; that he was only hurried away in the first heat of passion; and that he'll by no means refuse submitting himself to anything you please, provided you would but treat him better than you do, and give him some person in marriage, with whom he has reason to be satisfied.

Harpagon. Oh! tell him, Mr. James, that on that proviso, he may expect anything from me; and that, Mariana excepted, I give him the liberty of choosing whom he pleases.

Mr. James. Let me alone. [To *Cleanthes*.] Well, your father is not so unreasonable as you make him; and he declared to me that 'twas your fierceness threw him into a passion; that 'twas your manner of acting put him upon having her; and that he will be very ready to grant you all you wish, provided you go about it with mildness, and pay him the deference, respect, and submission that a son owes to his father.

Cleanthes. Ah! Mr. James, you may assure him, that if he grants me Mariana, he shall always find me the most submissive of men; and that I shall never do anything but according to his pleasure.

Mr. James. [To *Harpagon*.] 'Tis done; he consents to what you say.

Harpagon. That's the happiest thing in the world.

Mr. James. [To *Cleanthes*.] All's over; he's satisfied with your promises.

Cleanthes. Heaven be praised.

Mr. James. Gentlemen, you've nothing to do but to discourse the matter over together; here are you now agreed; and you were just at daggers-drawn, for want of understanding one another.

Cleanthes. My dear Mr. James, I shall be obliged to you all my life.

Mr. James. There's no reason, sir.

Harpagon. You have done me a pleasure, Mr. James, and it deserves a reward. [*Harpagon fumbling in his pocket, Mr. James holds out his hand, but Harpagon only pulls out his hand-kerchief.*] Go, I shall remember it, I assure you.

Mr. James. I kiss your hand.

SCENE V

Harpagon, Cleanthes.

Cleanthes. I ask your pardon, father, for the passion I discovered.

Harpagon. 'Tis nothing at all.

Cleanthes. I assure you it gives me all the concern in the world.

Harpagon. And it gives me all the joy in the world, to see you brought to reason.

Cleanthes. What goodness is it in you so soon to forget my fault!

Harpagon. One easily forgets the faults of children, when they return to their duty.

Cleanthes. What, to retain no resentment for all my extravagances!

Harpagon. 'Tis what you oblige me to by the submission and respect with which you carry yourself.

Cleanthes. I promise you, father, that I shall preserve in my mind the remembrance of your goodness, even to the grave.

Harpagon. And I promise you, there's nothing you mayn't obtain of me.

Cleanthes. Ah! father, I ask nothing more of you, you have given me enough, when you gave me Mariana.

Harpagon. How!

Cleanthes. I say, father, that you have made me too happy,

and that I find everything included in the favour of giving me Mariana.

Harpagon. Who is it talks of giving you Mariana?

Cleanthes. You, father.

Harpagon. I?

Cleanthes. Most certainly.

Harpagon. How I? 'Tis you promised to renounce her.

Cleanthes. I renounce her?

Harpagon. Yes.

Cleanthes. Not at all.

Harpagon. Haven't you given up all pretences to her?

Cleanthes. On the contrary, I'm more determined than ever.

Harpagon. How, rascal, again?

Cleanthes. Nothing can alter me.

Harpagon. Let me at thee, villain.

Cleanthes. Do what you please.

Harpagon. I forbid thee ever seeing me more.

Cleanthes. Sooner the better.

Harpagon. I abandon thee.

Cleanthes. Abandon me.

Harpagon. I renounce thee for my son.

Cleanthes. Be it so.

Harpagon. I disinherit thee.

Cleanthes. What you will.

Harpagon. I give thee my curse.

Cleanthes. I've nothing to do with your gifts.

SCENE VI

Cleanthes, La Fleche.

La Fleche. [Coming out of the garden with a casket.] Ah! sir, I find you in the nick of time. Follow me, quick.

Cleanthes. What's there?

La Fleche. Follow me, I tell you, we're all right.

Cleanthes. How?

La Fleche. Here's your business.

Cleanthes. What?

La Fleche. I've had a sheep's eye upon't all day.

Cleanthes. What is it?

La Fleche. Your father's treasure, which I've caught.

Cleanthes. How hast thou done it?

La Fleche. You shall know all; let's away, I hear him cry out.

SCENE VII

Harpagon. [From the garden, crying thieves.] Thieves, thieves, murder, assassination! Justice, just Heaven! I'm undone, I'm murdered, they've cut my throat, they've stolen my money. Who can this be? What's become of him? Where is he? Where does he hide himself? What shall I do to find him? Whither run? Whither not run? Isn't he there? Isn't he here? Who's there? Stand. Restore me my money, rascal!— [To himself, laying hold of his own arm.] Ah! 'tis myself. My mind's disturbed; and I don't know where I am, who I am, or what I do. Alas! My poor money, my poor money, my dear friend, they've bereaved me of thee; and since thou art removed, I've lost my support, my consolation, my joy; everything's at an end with me, and I've no more to do in the world. Without thee 'tis impossible for me to live. 'Tis over with me, I can no more, I die, I'm dead, I'm buried. Is there nobody will raise me to life again, by restoring my dear money, or informing me who has taken it? Heh! What say you? Alas, 'tis nobody. Whoever they be that have given the blow, they must have nicked their opportunity with a great deal of care; they pitched upon the exact time when I was in discourse with my villain of a son. Let's out; I'll go demand justice, and order my whole family to be put to the torture; my maids, my footmen, my son, my daughter, and myself too. What a crowd's here got together! I can cast my eyes on nobody who gives me not suspicion, everything seems my thief. Heh! what are they talking of there? Of him that robbed me? What noise is that above? Is't my thief that's there? For Heaven's sake, if you know tidings of my thief, I beseech you tell me. Is he not hid there amongst you? They all stare at me, and fall alaughing. You'll see that they are certainly concerned in this robbery committed upon me. Here, quick, commissaries, archers, provosts, judges, racks, gibbets, and executioners. I'll hang all the world; and if I find not my money again, I'll hang myself afterwards.

ACT V

SCENE I

Harpagon, A Commissary.

Commissary. Let me alone, thank Heaven I know my business. 'Tis not of to-day that I've been employed in thief-catching; and would I had as many thousand crown-bags as I have hanged persons.

Harpagon. All magistrates are interested to take this affair in hand; and if they don't find me out my money, I'll demand justice upon justice itself.

Commissary. We must make the hue and cry as far as is requisite. You say that there was in this casket—

Harpagon. Ten thousand crowns well told.

Commissary. Ten thousand crowns.

Harpagon. [Weeping.] Ten thousand crowns.

Commissary. The robbery is considerable.

Harpagon. There's no punishment great enough for the enormity of the crime; and if it remains unpunished, the most sacred things are no longer secure.

Commissary. In what coin was the sum?

Harpagon. In good louis-d'ors, and ponderous pistoles.

Commissary. Whom do you suspect of this robbery?

Harpagon. All the world; and I'd have you take into custody the whole city and suburbs.

Commissary. You must not, believe me, scare people too much; but endeavour to fish out some evidence by fair means, in order to proceed afterwards with more rigour, for the recovery of the sum they have taken from you.

SCENE II

Harpagon, Commissary, Mr. James.

Mr. James. [At the end of the stage, turning back to the door he came out of.] I shall be back again presently. Let his throat be cut immediately; let 'em singe me his feet, let 'em put him into boiling water, and hang him me up at the ceiling.

Harpagon. Who? He that robbed me?

Mr. James. I speak of a sucking pig, which your steward has just sent me, and I'll dress him for you after my own fancy.

Harpagon. That's not the question. [Turns to the Commissary.] And here's one you are to talk with upon another affair.

Commissary. Don't put yourself in a fright. I'm not a man will scandalise you; and matters shall be carried on by fair means.

Mr. James. Is the gentleman to sup with you?

Commissary. In this case, my dear friend, you must hide nothing from your master.

Mr. James. Troth, sir, I'll show him all my skill can do; I will treat you in the best manner I possibly can.

Harpagon. That's not the affair.

Mr. James. If I don't make you as good cheer as I would, 'tis the fault of your Mr. Steward, who has clipped my wings with the scissors of his economy.

Harpagon. Rascal, we're about other matters than supper; and I desire thou'l tell me tidings of the money they've taken from me.

Mr. James. Have they taken your money?

Harpagon. Yes, rascal; and I'll have thee hanged if thou dost not restore it me.

Commissary. [To *Harpagon.*] Pray now don't use him ill. I see, by his looks, he's an honest fellow; and that, without being sent to gaol, he'll discover all you want to know. Yes, friend, if you confess the thing to us, no harm shall come to you, and you shall be properly rewarded by your master. They've taken his money from him to-day, and it can't be but you must know some tidings of this affair.

Mr. James. [Aside.] The very thing I wish, to be revenged on our steward. Since he came within our doors, he's the favourite; no advice heard but his; and besides, the late cudgelling bout sticks on my stomach.

Harpagon. What art thou puzzling about?

Commissary. Let him alone. He's going to satisfy you; I told you that he was an honest fellow.

Mr. James. Sir, if you will have me speak out the real thing, I believe 'tis your dear Mr. Steward who has done the business.

Harpagon. Valere?

Mr. James. Yes.

Harpagon. He who appears to me so trusty?

Mr. James. The very same. I believe 'tis he that has robbed you.

Harpagon. Upon what grounds do you believe so?

Mr. James. On what grounds?

Harpagon. Yes.

Mr. James. I believe it—because I do believe it.

Commissary. But it is necessary to tell the circumstances you know.

Harpagon. Did you see him hovering about the place where I had put my money?

Mr. James. Yes, indeed. Where was your money?

Harpagon. In the garden.

Mr. James. Exactly; I saw him hovering about the garden. And what was this money in?

Harpagon. In a casket.

Mr. James. The very thing. I saw him have a casket.

Harpagon. And how was this casket made? I shall easily see whether it is mine.

Mr. James. How was it made?

Harpagon. Yes.

Mr. James. It was made—it was made like a casket.

Commissary. That's right. But describe it a little that we may see.

Mr. James. 'Tis a large casket.

Harpagon. That they stole from me is a small one.

Mr. James. Why, yes, it is small if you take it in that way; but I call it large for what it contains.

Commissary. And what colour is it?

Mr. James. What colour?

Commissary. Yes.

Mr. James. 'Tis of a colour—'Tis of a certain colour, there—Could not you help me out?

Harpagon. Heh?

Mr. James. Isn't it red?

Harpagon. No, grey.

Mr. James. Why, yes, grey-red; that's what I would have said.

Harpagon. There's no manner of doubt. 'Tis certainly it. Write sir, write down his deposition. Heavens! Whom to trust hereafter! one must never more swear to anything; and I believe after this, that I may rob myself.

Mr. James. [To *Harpagon.*] Here he is come back, sir. Don't go tell him however, that 'tis I who have discovered this.

SCENE III

Harpagon, Valere, Commissary, Mr. James.

Harpagon. Here, come and confess an action the most black, an attempt the most horrible that ever was committed.

Valere. What do y' mean, sir?

Harpagon. How, traitor, not blush at thy crime?

Valere. Of what crime would you speak?

Harpagon. Of what crime would I speak, scoundrel, as if you did not know what I would say? 'Tis in vain you pretend to disguise it. The business is out, and they have just now told me all. How could you abuse my kindness in this manner, and introduce yourself into my house on purpose to betray me, to play me a trick of this nature?

Valere. Sir, since they have discovered all to you, I won't seek to palliate, or deny the thing.

Mr. James. Oh! hoh! could I guess without thinking of it?

Valere. 'Twas my design to speak to you about it. And I was willing to wait a favourable opportunity. But since 'tis as it is, I conjure you not to ruffle yourself, and to hear my reasons.

Harpagon. And what fine reasons can you give me, infamous thief?

Valere. Nay, sir, I have not deserved such names. 'Tis true, I have committed an offence against you. But, after all, my fault is pardonable.

Harpagon. How pardonable? A premeditated blow! An assassination of this kind!

Valere. For goodness sake, don't put yourself in a passion. When you have heard me, you'll see the mischief is not so great as you make it.

Harpagon. The mischief not so great as I make it? What! my blood, my bowels, rascal?

Valere. Your blood, sir, is not fallen into bad hands. I'm of a rank not to do it injury; there's nothing in all this, but what I can well make reparation for.

Harpagon. So I intend you shall; and that you restore me what you have taken from me.

Valere. Your honour, sir, shall be fully satisfied.

Harpagon. Honour's not in the question here. But, tell me, who moved you to this action?

Valere. Alas! Do you ask me?

Harpagon. Yes, truly, I do ask you.

Valere. A god who carries his excuse for everything he does.
Love.

Harpagon. Love!

Valere. Yes.

Harpagon. Fine love, fine love, i'faith! Love of my
louis-d'ors.

Valere. No, sir, 'tis not your riches have tempted me, 'tis
not that has dazzled me; and I protest and vow never to make
pretence to any of your wealth, provided you would leave me
in the possession of what I have.

Harpagon. I will not do it, a legion take me if I suffer it: but
see what insolence, to desire to keep what he has robbed me of.

Valere. Do you call this a robbery?

Harpagon. Do I call it a robbery? A treasure such as this?

Valere. 'Tis a treasure, 'tis true, and the most precious one,
doubtless, that you have: but to let me have it will not be losing
it. Upon my knees I ask it of you, this most charming treasure;
and, to do right, you must grant it me.

Harpagon. The devil a bit. What a deuce does this drive at?

Valere. We have promised mutual faith, and have sworn
never to forsake each other.

Harpagon. The oath is admirable, and the promise droll.

Valere. We are engaged to an eternal union.

Harpagon. I shall forbid the banns, I assure you.

Valere. Nothing but death can separate us.

Harpagon. This is being devilishly bewitched with my money.

Valere. I have told you already, sir, 'twas not interest that
carried me to do what I have done. My heart has not acted
by such springs as you imagine, and a motive more noble has
inspired me with this resolution.

Harpagon. You'll see 'tis out o' Christian charity he would
have my money. But I'll give effectual orders here; and
justice, impudent hang-dog, will do me right for all.

Valere. You may use me as you will, and here I am ready
to suffer all the violence you please; but I beg of you, at least
to believe, that if there is any harm, 'tis only me you are to
accuse; and that your daughter is not, in the least, to blame
in all this.

Harpagon. I much believe it truly. 'Twould be very
strange had my daughter been accomplice in such a crime.
But I expect to have my treasure again, and that you confess
whither you've carried it.

Valere. I? I have not carried it away, 'tis still at home.

Harpagon. [Aside.] Oh my dear casket! [Aloud.] Is't not gone out of my house?

Valere. No, sir.

Harpagon. Heh, tell me a little, hast thou not been dabbling?

Valere. I dabbling? Ah! You wrong us both; the flame with which I burn is too pure, too full of respect to admit of that.

Harpagon. [Aside.] Burn for my casket!

Valere. I would much rather have died, than have discovered the least offensive thought; there was too much wisdom, too much honesty for that.

Harpagon. My casket too honest!

Valere. All my desires were limited to the pleasure of sight; and nothing criminal has profaned the passion those fair eyes have inspired me with.

Harpagon. [Aside.] The fair eyes of my casket! He speaks of it as a lover of his mistress.

Valere. Dame Claude, sir, knows the whole truth of this adventure, and she can bear witness.

Harpagon. How! my maid an accomplice in the affair?

Valere. Yes, sir, she was witness of our engagement; and 'twas after she knew my passion was honourable that she assisted me in persuading your daughter to plight me her troth, and receive mine.

Harpagon. [Aside.] Hey! What, does the fear of justice make him rave? [To *Valere.*] What dost thou perplex us with about my daughter?

Valere. I say, sir, that I had all the difficulty in the world to bring her modesty to consent to what my love required.

Harpagon. The modesty of whom?

Valere. Of your daughter; and it was only since yesterday she could prevail upon herself to resolve we should mutually sign a promise of marriage.

Harpagon. Has my daughter signed thee a promise of marriage?

Valere. Yes, sir, as on my part I have signed one to her.

Harpagon. O Heavens! Misfortune upon misfortune!

Mr. James. [To the Commissary.] Write, sir, write.

Harpagon. Complication of mischief! Excess of despair!

[To the Commissary.] Come, sir, do the duty of your office, and draw me up an indictment for him as a felon, and a suborner.

Mr. James. As a felon and a suborner.

Valere. These are names that don't belong to me; and when you know who I am——

SCENE IV

Harpagon, Eliza, Mariana, Valere, Frosina, Mr. James, Commissary.

Harpagon. Ah? Graceless child! Daughter unworthy of such a father! Is it thus you put in practice the lessons I've given you? Do you suffer yourself to be caught by an infamous thief, and engage yourself to him without my consent? But you shall be deceived, both of you. [To *Eliza.*] Four strong walls shall answer for your conduct; [To *Valere.*] and a good gallows, impudent rascal, shall do me justice for thy audaciousness.

Valere. It will not be your passion will judge the affair; and they'll hear me, at least before they condemn me.

Harpagon. I was wrong to say a gallows, thou shalt be broken alive on the wheel.

Eliza. [Kneeling to her father.] Ah! father, be a little more humane in your sentiments, I beseech you, and don't go to push matters with the utmost violence of paternal power. Suffer not yourself to be carried away by the first gusts of your passion; and give yourself time to consider what you do. Take the pains of looking more narrowly into the person you're so enraged at. He's quite another man than at present he appears to you; and you will find it less strange I should have given myself to him, when you know that had it not been for him you would long ago have lost me for ever. Yes, father, 'tis he who saved me from the great hazard which you know I ran in the water; and to whom you owe the life of that very daughter, who—

Harpagon. All this is nothing; and it had been much better for me, had he suffered thee to drown, than to do what he has done.

Eliza. I conjure you, sir, by paternal love grant me—

Harpagon. No, no, I'll hear nothing; and justice must do its office.

Mr. James. [Aside.] You'll pay me the blows of the cudgel.

Frosina. [Aside.] What strange perplexity is here!

SCENE V

Anselm, Harpagon, Eliza, Mariana, Frosina, Valere, Commissary, Mr. James.

Anselm. What's the matter here, Signor Harpagon? You are very much ruffled, I see.

Harpagon. Ah! Signor Anselm, I am one of the most

unfortunate men; and here's the Lord knows what vexation and disorder in respect to the contract you come to sign. I'm assassinated in my fortune, I'm assassinated in my honour; and there's a traitor, a villain, who has violated all the most sacred ties; who has slid himself into my family under the title of a menial servant, to rob me of my money, and to seduce my daughter.

Valere. Who minds your money, that you make such a senseless pother about?

Harpagon. Yes, they've made each other a promise of marriage. This affront concerns you, Signor Anselm; and 'tis you who ought to take party against him, and prosecute him to the utmost at your own expense, to revenge yourself on his insolence.

Anselm. It is not my design to force myself upon anybody, or make any pretences to a heart which has already bestowed itself. But as to your interests, I'm ready to espouse 'em as if they were my own.

Harpagon. There's a gentleman that's a very honest Commissary, who tells me he'll omit nothing which concerns the duty of his office. [To the Commissary, pointing to *Valere*.] Charge him, sir, as you should do, and make things very criminal.

Valere. I don't see what crime you can make of the passion I have for your daughter; and the punishment to which you think I may be condemned on account of our engagement, when 'tis known who I am—

Harpagon. I value all these stories not a straw; and the world nowadays is full of nothing but your rascally quality, your impostors, who make advantage of their obscurity, who trick 'emselves insolently out, with the first illustrious name that comes into their head.

Valere. Know that I have a heart too honest, to take upon me anything which does not belong to me; and that all Naples can bear witness of my birth.

Anselm. Soft and fair, take care what you are going to say. You run more risk here than you're aware of. You speak before a person to whom all Naples is known, and who can easily see through your story.

Valere. I'm not a man should fear anything; if you know Naples, you know who Don Thomas d'Alburcy was.

Anselm. Doubtless I know him, and few people knew him better than I.

Harpagon. I care not either for Don Thomas, or for Don Martin. [Seeing two candles burning, he blows out one.]

Anselm. Pray let him speak; we shall see what he'll say of him.

Valere. I would say, that he's the person who gave me birth.

Anselm. He?

Valere. Yes.

Anselm. Go, you jest; find some other story that may succeed better for you; and don't pretend to save yourself under this piece of imposture.

Valere. Pray express yourself with more decency. It is no imposture; and I advance nothing here, which it would not be easy for me to justify.

Anselm. How! dare you call yourself son of Don Thomas d'Alburcy?

Valere. Yes, I dare; and I am ready to maintain this truth against any person whatsoever.

Anselm. 'Tis a marvellous assurance. Know to your confusion, that it is sixteen years ago at least, that the person you mention was lost at sea with his wife and children, endeavouring to save their lives from the cruel persecutions which accompanied the troubles at Naples, and which occasioned the banishment of many noble families.

Valere. Yes. But know to your confusion, that his son, seven years of age, with a servant, was saved from that shipwreck by a Spanish vessel; and that this son saved is the person who speaks to you. Know that the captain of this vessel, being touched at my misfortune, took a kindness to me; that he brought me up as his own son; and that arms have been my employment, ever since I was capable of 'em. That I have learnt of late that my father was not dead, as I had always believed; that passing this way, to go in search of him, an adventure concerted by Heaven, brought me to the sight of the charming Eliza; that this sight made me slave to her beauty; and that the violence of my love, and the severities of her father, made me take a resolution to introduce myself into his house, and send another person in quest of my parents.

Anselm. But what testimony, other than your own word, may assure us that this is not a fable built upon a truth?

Valere. The Spanish captain; a ruby seal which belonged to my father; a bracelet of agate which my mother put upon my arm; and old Pedro, the servant who was saved with me from the shipwreck.

Mariana. Alas! I myself can answer here for what you've said, that you do not impose upon us; and everything you say gives me clearly to know that you are my brother.

Valere. You my sister?

Mariana. Yes, my heart was touched from the moment you opened your mouth; and our mother who will be overjoyed at sight of you, has a thousand times entertained me with the misfortunes of our family. Heaven too suffered not us to perish in that melancholy shipwreck; but it only saved our lives at the expense of our liberty; and they were corsairs who took up my mother and myself from the wreck of our vessel. After ten years of slavery, a lucky accident gave us our liberty, and we returned to Naples, where we found all our effects sold, without being able to hear any tidings of our father. We took passage for Genoa, whither my mother went to pick up the unhappy remains of a family estate that had been torn to pieces; and from thence flying from the barbarous injustice of her relations, she came into these parts, where she has scarce lived any other than a languishing life.

Anselm. Oh Heaven! How great are the strokes of thy power! And how well dost thou let us see, that it belongs to thee alone to work miracles! Embrace me, my children, and mix your transports with those of your father!

Valere. Are you our father?

Mariana. Is it you my mother has so much lamented?

Anselm. Yes, my daughter, yes, my son, I am Don Thomas d'Alburcy, whom Heaven saved from the waves, with all the money he had with him; and who having thought you all dead for more than sixteen years, was preparing after long voyages, to seek for the consolation of a new family, in marrying some mild-tempered and discreet person. The little security I saw for my life in returning to Naples, made me renounce it for ever; and having found means to sell all I had there, I have settled myself here, where, under the name of Anselm, I endeavoured to get rid of all the vexations of that other name, which had occasioned me so many crosses.

Harpagon. [To *Anselm.*] Is that your son?

Anselm. Yes.

Harpagon. I shall make you pay me the ten thousand crowns he has robbed me of.

Anselm. He robbed you!

Harpagon. The very same.

Valere. Who told you so?

Harpagon. Mr. James.

Valere. Didst thou tell him so?

Mr. James. You see that I say nothing.

Harpagon. Yes. There's Mr. Commissary who has taken his deposition.

Valere. Can you think me capable of so base an action?

Harpagon. Capable, or not capable, I'll have my money again.

SCENE VI

Harpagon, Anselm, Eliza, Mariana, Cleanthes, Valere, Frosina, Commissary, Mr. James, La Fleche.

Cleanthes. Don't torment yourself, sir, accuse nobody. I've had news of your affair; and I come here to tell you, that if you will but resolve to let me marry Mariana, your money shall be restored you.

Harpagon. Where is it?

Cleanthes. Give yourself no manner of trouble. 'Tis in a place I'm answerable for; and all depends upon me alone. You are to tell me what you determine upon; and you have your choice, either to give me up Mariana, or lose your casket.

Harpagon. Have they took nothing out of it?

Cleanthes. Nothing at all. Consider whether you design to subscribe to this marriage, and join your consent to that of her mother, who leaves her the liberty of choice betwixt us two.

Mariana. [To *Cleanthes*.] But you don't consider that this consent alone is not sufficient; and that Heaven, with a brother, as you see, [Pointing to *Valere*.] has restored me a father, [Pointing to *Anselm*.] from whom you are to obtain me.

Anselm. Heaven, my children, has not restored me to you, to oppose your desires. Signor *Harpagon*, you know very well that the choice of a young person will fall upon the son, sooner than upon the father. Come, don't oblige people to say what's unnecessary for us to hear, and consent, as I do, to this double marriage.

Harpagon. To be well advised, I must see my casket.

Cleanthes. You shall see it safe and sound.

Harpagon. I have no money to give my children in marriage.

Anselm. Well, I have some for 'em, let not that disquiet you.

Harpagon. You'll oblige yourself to defray the whole expense of these two marriages.

Anselm. Yes, I do oblige myself to it. Are you satisfied?

Harpagon. Yes, provided you will order me a suit of clothes for the nuptials.

Anselm. Agreed. Come let's enjoy the mirth this happy day presents us with.

Commissary. Hold, gentlemen, hold, softly, if you please. Who pays me for my writings?

Harpagon. We have nothing to do with your writings.

Commissary. Indeed! But I shan't pretend to make 'em for nothing, not I.

Harpagon. [Pointing to Mr. James.] There's a fellow I'll give you to hang for payment.

Mr. James. Alas! What must one do then? They cudgel me for speaking truth; and they would hang me for lying.

Anselm. Signor Harpagon, you must pardon him this piece of imposture.

Harpagon. You'll pay the Commissary then.

Anselm. Done. Let us go immediately, and share our joy with your mother.

Harpagon. And I, to see my dear casket.

THE ROMANTIC LADIES
(A COMEDY)

THE ROMANTIC LADIES, *a Comedy of One Act in Prose, acted at Paris
at the Theatre of the Little-Bourbon the 18th of November, 1659*

Although the comedy of *The Romantic Ladies* is not one of the best, with regard to the plot, nor one of the highest kind, yet it deserves to hold a considerable rank amongst the principal works of Molière. He ventured, in this piece, to forsake the beaten road of complicated intrigues to conduct us in a comic path, unknown till him. A fine and delicate critic upon the manners and follies which were peculiar to his time, appeared to him to be the essential object of good comedy.

The passion for wit, or rather the abuse they made of it, was a kind of contagious malady then in fashion. The forced bombast style in romances, which the women admired for the very reasons which have since discredited those works, had got into conversation. In short, the vice of affectation, both in language and sentiments, run through both high and common life; 'twas at this conjuncture that the comedy of *The Romantic Ladies* appeared; never was greater success known; the multitude of spectators made the company demand double prices at the second representation of it, and the piece run for four months together. It produced a general reformation, people saw themselves in it, laughed, and gave the truest applause to it by forsaking their folly. Mr. Ménage, who assisted at the first representation, said to Chapelain, "You and I both approved of all these follies which have been now criticised so finely, and with so much good sense; believe me we must burn what we have adored, and adore what we have burnt." This acknowledgement was only the reflection of a man of sense who found himself undeceived; but the saying of an old man, who in the middle of the pit cried out through instinct, "take courage, Molière, this is a good comedy," is the pure expression of nature, which shows the empire truth holds over the human mind.

ACTORS

LA GRANGE.

DU CROISY.

GORGIBUS, *a good citizen.*

MAGDALEN, *daughter of Gorgibus,* }
CATHOS, *niece of Gorgibus.* } *The Romantic Ladies.*

MAROT, *maid to The Romantic Ladies.*

ALMANZOR, *footman to The Romantic Ladies.*

MARQUIS DE MASCARILLE, *La Grange's valet.*

VISCOUNT JODELET, *Du Croisy's valet.*

LUCILIA, } *Neighbours to Gorgibus.*

CELIMENA, }

TWO CHAIRMEN.

FIDDLERS.

SCENE: *Paris, in Gorgibus's house.*

ACT I

SCENE I

La Grange, Du Croisy.

Du Croisy. Mr. La Grange.

La Grange. What?

Du Croisy. Look at me a little without laughing.

La Grange. Well.

Du Croisy. What say you of our visit?—are you highly pleased with it?

La Grange. Have we both reason to be so, in your opinion?

Du Croisy. Not at all, to say the truth.

La Grange. For my part, I assure you, that I am quite shocked at it.—Pray now, did ever anybody behold a couple of foolish country wenches give themselves such airs as these, or two men treated with more contempt than we?—They could hardly bring themselves to order chairs for us.—I never saw such whispering as there was between them; such yawning, such rubbing of the eyes, and asking so often what o'clock it was. Did they answer anything more than “yes” or “no” to all that we could say to them? And don't you, in short, agree with me, that if we had been the greatest scoundrels in the world, they could not use us worse than they have done?

Du Croisy. Methinks you take the matter much to heart.

La Grange. I do take it so undoubtedly, and in such a manner, that I'll revenge myself for this impertinence.—I know well enough the reason of their slighting us. The conceited air has not infected Paris only, but is likewise spread into the countries, and our ridiculous nymphs have sucked in their share of it. In a word, they're a strange medley of coquetry and affectation. I see what a man must be, to be well received by 'em, and if you'll trust to me, we'll play them a trick shall make them see their folly, and teach them to distinguish people a little better.

Du Croisy. How can this be done?

La Grange. I have a certain valet named Mascarille, who passes for a sort of a wit, in the opinion of many people; for nothing nowadays is cheaper than wit. He's an unaccountable fellow, that takes it in his head to appear as a man of

quality. He usually values himself for intrigues and poetry, and despises other valets so far as to call them brutes.

Du Croisy. Well; what mean you to do with him?

La Grange. What mean I to do with him!—he must—but, let's be gone from hence, before—

SCENE II

Gorgibus, Du Croisy, La Grange.

Gorgibus. Well, gentlemen, you have seen my niece and my daughter; do matters go well? what is the result of this visit?

La Grange. That's a thing you may better learn from them than us. All we can say to you, is, that we return you thanks for the favour you have done us, and remain your most humble servants.

Du Croisy. Your most humble servants.

Gorgibus. [Alone.] Hoity-toity! methinks they go away dissatisfied. What could occasion their discontent?—I must learn a little how it is.—Soho there.

SCENE III

Gorgibus, Marot.

Marot. What would you please to have, sir?

Gorgibus. Where are your mistresses?

Marot. In their closet.

Gorgibus. What are they doing?

Marot. Making pomatum for their lips.

Gorgibus. They make too much pomatum.—Bid 'em come down.—[Alone.] These hussies, with their pomatum have, I think, a mind to ruin me. I see nothing all about but whites of eggs, nun's cream, and a thousand other fooleries. They have used, since we came hither, the lard of a dozen hogs at least; and four servants, might, every day, be maintained with the sheep's trotters that they employ.

SCENE IV

Magdalen, Cathos, Gorgibus.

Gorgibus. Truly, there's great occasion to be at such an expense to grease your faces.—Inform me, pray, a little, what you have done to these gentlemen, that I saw them go away with so much coldness. Did not I charge you to receive them as persons that I intended for your husbands?

Magdalen. Dear father, what regard would you have us pay to the irregular proceedings of these people?

Cathos. What way, uncle, can a woman that has ever so little understanding be able to reconcile herself to their persons?

Gorgibus. What see you in them to find fault with?

Magdalen. Fine gallantry of theirs, indeed!—What! to begin immediately with matrimony!

Gorgibus. With what would you have 'em begin? with whoring?—Is not this a way of acting which both of you have reason to approve of as well as I? Can anything be more obliging than this; and that holy tie they desire, is it not a proof of the fairness of their designs?

Magdalen. O father! what you say is extremely like a citizen. It makes me ashamed to hear you talk in this manner: you should acquaint yourself a little with the fine air of things.

Gorgibus. I've nothing to do with the air nor the song—I tell you, that matrimony is an holy and a sacred thing, and to begin with that is to act like honest people.

Magdalen. Lard! were the whole world like you, a romance would be ended presently! what a fine thing it would have been if Cyrus had immediately espoused Mandana, and if Aronce had been married in all haste to Clelia!

Gorgibus. What is this she talks of?

Magdalen. Here's my cousin, father, will tell you as well as I, that matrimony ought never to be brought about till after other adventures.—A lover, to be agreeable, must understand how to utter fine sentiments, to sigh forth the soft, the tender, and the passionate; and his addresses must be according to the rules.—In the first place, he should behold, either at church, or in the park, or at some public ceremony, the person of whom he becomes enamoured: or, else, he should be fatally introduced to her by a relation or a friend, and go from her melancholy and pensive. He conceals his passion, for some time, from the beloved object, but, however, pays her several visits, at which some discourse about gallantry never fails to be brought upon the carpet to exercise the wits of all the company.—The day comes for him to declare himself, which usually should be done in the walk of some garden, while the company is at a distance. This declaration is followed by an immediate resentment, which appears by our colouring, and which, for a while, banishes the lover from our presence. He finds afterwards the way to pacify us, to accustom us insensibly to hear his passion, and to draw from us that confession which causes so much trouble.

—Then follow the adventures; the rivals that thwart an established inclination, the persecutions of fathers, the jealousies arising from false appearances, the complainings, the despair, the running off with, and its consequences. Thus are things carried on in a handsome manner, and these are the rules that cannot be dispensed with in a genteel piece of gallantry.—But to come point blank to the conjugal union! to make no love but by making the marriage contract, and take a romance just by the tail! once more, dear father, nothing can be more mechanic than such a proceeding, and I'm sick at heart with the idea only that it gives me.

Gorgibus. What the devil of nonsense is this I hear? This is a towering style, indeed!

Cathos. In short, uncle, my cousin tells you the truth of the matter. How can one receive people well whose courtship is all an impropriety? I'll lay a wager they have never seen the Map of Tenderness, and that Fond Epistles, Little Disquietudes, Polite Letters, and Sprightly Verses, are regions to them unknown. Don't you observe their whole person shows it, and that they have nothing of the air which gives one at first sight a good opinion of people?—To come upon a love-visit with a leg entirely unadorned; a hat destitute of feathers; a head with the locks irregular; and a habit that endures an indigence of ribbons:—Heavens! what lovers are these! what a stinginess in dress! what a barrenness of conversation! it's over with them presently, they keep it not up at all. I took notice likewise, that their neckcloths were not made by a good workwoman, and that their breeches were not big enough by more than half a foot.

Gorgibus. I think they are both mad, nor can I understand anything of this gibberish.—*Cathos,* and you Magdalen.

Magdalen. Ah! pray, father, leave off those strange names, and call us by some other.

Gorgibus. What d'ye mean by those strange names! are they not your Christian names?

Magdalen. Lard! how vulgar you are!—for my own part, one thing I wonder at, is how you could possibly get such a sprightly girl as I. Did ever anybody in a beautiful style talk of Cathos or of Magdalen? and must you not acknowledge, that either of these names would be enough to disgrace the finest romance in the world.

Cathos. Really, uncle, an ear that's a little delicate suffers extremely at hearing these words pronounced; and the name of Polixena, which my cousin has chosen, and that of Amintha

which I give myself, have an agreeableness which you must acknowledge.

Gorgibus. Harkee,—there needs but one word.—I don't know that you have other names than what were given you by your godfathers and godmothers; and as for those gentlemen of whom we speak, I am acquainted both with their families and their fortunes, and positively resolve that they shall be your husbands. I'm tired of keeping you upon my hands, and the care of a couple of girls is somewhat too weighty a charge for a man of my years.

Cathos. For myself, uncle, all I can say is, that I think matrimony a mighty shocking thing. How can one endure the thought of lying by a man that's really naked?

Magdalen. Give us leave to take breath a little amongst the beau-monde of Paris, where we are but just arrived. Permit us to form the contexture of our romance at leisure, and don't hasten on the conclusion so much.

Gorgibus. [Aside.] There's no question of it; they're quite distracted. [Aloud.] Once more, I tell you, I comprehend nothing of all this nonsense, but I'll be master absolutely; and to cut short all kind of dispute, either you shall both be married very speedily, or, faith you shall be nuns;—that I swear solemnly.

SCENE V

Cathos, Magdalen.

Cathos. Lard! my dear; how is thy father immersed in matter! how gross is his understanding! and what a gloominess overcasts his soul!

Magdalen. What would you have, my dear? I'm in confusion for him.—I can hardly persuade myself that I am indeed his daughter, but believe some adventure one time or other will happen to discover a more illustrious descent.

Cathos. I believe so, truly; there is all the likelihood in the world of it; and for my part, when I consider myself also—

SCENE VI

Cathos, Magdalen, Marot.

Marot. Here's a footman asks if you're at home, and says, his master would come to see you.

Magdalen. Learn you fool, to express yourself a little less

vulgarly.—Say, here's an attendant enquires if it is commodious for you to become visible.

Marot. I don't understand Latin, mistress, and ha'n't learned flossophy out of *Cyrus*, as you ha' done.

Magdalen. Impertinent creature! how can this be endured! —And who is the master of this footman.

Marot. He told me, 'twas the Marquis de Mascarille.

Magdalen. Ah! my dear! a marquis! a marquis!—Well, go tell him we are visible.—This is certainly some wit, who has heard us talked of.

Cathos. Undoubtedly, my dear.

Magdalen. He must be received below in the parlour rather than in our chamber; let's adjust our hair a little, and maintain our character.—Come in hither, quickly, and hold to us the counsellor of the graces.

Marot. O' my faith, I can't tell what sort of beast that is; you must talk like a Christian if you'd have me know your meaning.

Cathos. Bring us the looking-glass, you ignorant wretch! and take care not to sully its beauty by the communication of your image.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII

Mascarille, and two chairmen.

Mascarille. Hold, chairmen, hold. La, la, la, la, la, la.—I think these varlets intend to beat me to pieces by jumbling me against the walls and pavement.

First Chairman. Ay, marry: because the gate is narrow, and you'd make us come quite in with you.

Mascarille. I think so truly.—Would you have me expose the delicacy of my feathers to the inclemency of the rainy season, you rascals, and let the dirt receive the impression of my shoes? —begone: take away your chair.

Second Chairman. Then, please to pay us, sir.

Mascarille. Hem!

Second Chairman. Please to give us our money, sir, I say.

Mascarille. [Giving him a blow.] How, rogue, ask money of a person of my quality?

Second Chairman. Are poor people to be paid thus? and will your quality get a dinner for us?

Mascarille. Ha, ha, ha, I shall teach you to know yourself. —Dare the scoundrels play upon me!

First Chairman. [Taking one of the poles of his chair.] Come, pay us quickly.

Mascarille. What?

First Chairman. I say, I'll have the money this moment.

Mascarille. This now is an understanding fellow.

First Chairman. Make haste then.

Mascarille. Ay, you speak properly, for your part: but t'other is a rogue that knows not what he says.—There: are you contented?

First Chairman. No, I'm not contented, you struck my companion, and— [Holding up his pole.]

Mascarille. Hold, there, that's for the blow.—Everything may be obtained of me, when people take the right method.—Go: but come and fetch me by and by, and carry me to the drawing-room.

SCENE VIII

Marot, Mascarille.

Marot. Sir, my mistresses will come presently.

Mascarille. Let them not hurry themselves, I am here posted commodiously for waiting.

Marot. They are here.

SCENE IX

Magdalen, Cathos, Mascarille, Almanzor.

Mascarille. [After having saluted them.] Ladies, you'll be surprised, no doubt, at the boldness of my visit: but your reputation brings this unlucky affair upon you, and merit has for me such potent charms, that I run everywhere after it.

Magdalen. If you pursue merit, it's not in our grounds that you must hunt.

Cathos. To find merit at our house, you must have brought it hither yourself.

Mascarille. Ah, I engage to prove the contrary.—Fame told the truth in her relation of your worth, and you are going to pique, repique, and capot all that is polite in Paris.

Magdalen. Your complaisance pushes a little too far the liberality of its praises, and my cousin and I are not prepared to oppose our gravity to the sweetness of your flattery.

Cathos. My dear, we should call for chairs.

Magdalen. Here, Almanzor.

Almanzor. Madam.

Magdalen. Convey hither to us, instantly, the conveniences of conversation.

Mascarille. But hold, am I in safety here? [Exit *Almanzor*.]

Cathos. What is't you fear?

Mascarille. Some robbery upon my heart, some assassination of my freedom. I behold there a pair of eyes that seem to be very naughty boys, to insult over liberty, and use a heart as a Turk does a negro slave ——What the deuce do they put themselves upon their murdering guard as soon as one comes near 'em. Ah! By my faith, I'm suspicious of 'em, and must either scamper away, or expect city-security that they shall not do me mischief.

Magdalen. My dear, this is the sprightly character.

Cathos. I see, indeed, he's an Amilcar.

Magdalen. Fear nothing, our eyes have no ill designs, and your heart may be well assured of their good behaviour.

Cathos. But, good sir, be not inexorable to that elbow-chair which has stretched out its arms to you for a quarter of an hour; indulge a little the desire it has to embrace you.

Mascarille. [Having combed himself, and adjusted the rolls of his stockings.] Well, ladies, what do you say of Paris?

Magdalen. Alas! what can we say of it? 'twould be the antipodes of reason not to acknowledge that Paris is the grand cabinet of wonders, the centre of good taste, wit, and gallantry.

Mascarille. I think, for my part, that out of Paris there's no living for people of fashion.

Cathos. That's an indisputable truth.

Mascarille. It's a little dirty; but then one has a chair.

Magdalen. A chair, really, is a wonderful security against the insults of the dirt and the bad weather.

Mascarille. You receive abundance of visits sure? what fine genius is yours?

Magdalen. Alas! we're not yet known: but we are in the way so to be; for we have a particular friend, that has promised to bring hither all the gentlemen concerned in the Choice Collection of Miscellanies.

Cathos. And some others whom he named to us likewise as the sovereign judges of fine things.

Mascarille. I'll do your business better than anybody; they all visit me, and I can say that I never rise without half a dozen wits about me.

Magdalen. O lard! we shall be obliged to you to the last degree if you'll do us that kindness; for, in short, one must have

the acquaintance of all these gentlemen, if one would be of the beau-monde. 'Tis these that influence reputation at Paris; and in such a manner, you know, that only to keep 'em company is enough to occasion the report of one's being a critic, though there should be no other reason for it. But for myself, what I particularly consider, is, that by means of these ingenious visits, one is taught an hundred things which there's a necessity of knowing, and which are the quintessence of fine wit. One learns by it every day the little new gallantries, the pretty correspondencies in prose or verse. One knows for certain, that such a person has composed the finest piece in the world upon such a subject; such a lady has made words to such a tune; this person has formed a madrigal upon enjoyment; that has composed stanzas on infidelity; Mr. Such a One wrote an ode of six lines yesterday evening to Mrs. Such a One, to which she sent him an answer this morning at eight o'clock; such an author has laid such a design; this writer is about the third part of his romance; that other is putting his works into the press.—'Tis this makes you esteemed in company; and if people are ignorant of these things, I would not give one pin for all the wit that they can have.

Cathos. In short, I think 'tis excessively ridiculous, for a person to pretend to wit and not know even the least stanza that is made every day; and for my part, I should be under all the confusion in the world, should anybody ask me if I had seen some new thing, which I had not seen.

Mascarille. 'Tis a shame, indeed, not to have the first of whatever is composed; but don't be in any pain, I'll establish an academy of wits at your house and give you my word, not a rhyme shall be made at Paris, which you shall not have by heart before anybody else.—As for myself, such as you see me, I write a little when I'm in the mind, and you'll find handed about of mine in the fine assemblies at Paris, two hundred songs, as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals, without reckoning riddles and descriptions.

Magdalen. I must acknowledge that I am furiously fond of descriptions; I think nothing is so gallant.

Mascarille. Descriptions are difficult, and require a profound wit: you shall see some in my manner that won't disgust you.

Cathos. For my part, I am terribly fond of riddles.

Mascarille. They exercise the wit, and I have made four of them already this morning, which I'll give you to guess the meaning of.

Magdalen. Madrigals are agreeable, when they are well turned.

Mascarille. That's my particular qualification, and I'm about turning the whole Roman history into madrigals.

Magdalen. Ah! certainly, that must be incomparably fine; I bespeak one book at least, if you have it printed.

Mascarille. I promise each of you one, bound in the best manner. It's below my quality; but I do it only for the benefit of the booksellers that tease me.

Magdalen. I fancy it's a great pleasure to see one's self in print.

Mascarille. Without doubt; but now I think on't, I must tell you an extempore that I made yesterday at a duchess's, a friend of mine, whom I was visiting; for I am devilishly ready at extempores.

Cathos. An extempore is certainly the touchstone of wit.

Mascarille. Hear then.

Magdalen. We do, with all our ears.

Mascarille. Oh! oh! quite off my guard was I;

Whilst no harm thinking,

You

I view;

Slyly your eyes

My heart surprise;

Stop thief, stop thief, stop thief, I cry.

Cathos. Ah! my stars! this is carried to the utmost pitch of gallantry.

Mascarille. All I do has an air of the gentleman, it does not favour of the pedant.

Magdalen. It is distant from that above two thousand leagues.

Mascarille. Did you mind this beginning, oh, oh! this is extraordinary, oh! oh!—like a man that bethinks himself all at once, oh! oh!—The surprise, oh! oh!

Magdalen. Ay, I think that, oh! oh! admirable.

Mascarille. This is nothing as it were.

Cathos. Oh! my stars! what's that you say? Such sort of things as these cannot be enough esteemed.

Magdalen. No doubt on't, and I should like better to have made that, oh! oh! than an epic poem.

Mascarille. Egad, you've a good taste.

Magdalen. Eh! I've not an exceeding bad one.

Mascarille. But don't you admire also, quite off my guard

was I;—quite off my guard was I, I minded nothing of the matter: a natural way of speaking, quite off my guard was I.—Whilst no harm thinking; whilst innocently, without malice, like a poor sheep, you I view; that is to say, I amuse myself with considering, with observing, with contemplating you. Slyly your eyes—What think you of that word slyly? Isn't it well chosen?

Cathos. Perfectly well.

Mascarille. Slyly, cunningly, it seems as it were a cat coming to catch a mouse, slyly.

Magdalen. Nothing can be better.

Mascarille. My heart surprise, snatch it away, force it from me;—Stop thief, stop thief, stop thief, stop thief. Would you not imagine a man were crying out and running after a thief to scize him? stop thief, stop thief, stop thief, stop thief.

Magdalen. It must be owned that this has a witty and gallant turn.

Mascarille. I'll sing you the tune I've made to't.

Cathos. You have learned music?

Mascarille. I?—not at all.

Cathos. How can it be then?

Mascarille. People of quality know everything, without ever learning anything.

Magdalen. Undoubtedly, my dear.

Mascarille. Hear if the tune be to your taste: hem, hem, la, la, la, la, la. The brutality of the season has furiously injured the delicacy of my voice:—but no matter, 'tis gentleman-like. [He sings.] Oh! oh! quite off my guard was I.—

Cathos. Ah! how passionate a tune is that! Doesn't it kill one with delight?

Magdalen. It is something in the chromatic taste.

Mascarille. Don't you find the thought well expressed in the tune? stop thief, stop thief. And then as if a body cried out violently, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop thief. Then all at once like a person out of breath,—stop thief.

Magdalen. This it is to understand the perfection of things, the grand perfection, the perfection of perfections. 'Tis all marvellous, I assure you; I'm in ecstasies both at the tune and the words.

Cathos. I never yet met with anything so strong as this.

Mascarille. All I do comes naturally to me, it's without study.

Magdalen. Nature has treated you like a very fond mother, and you are her darling child.

Mascarille. How do you pass away the time, ladies?

Cathos. No way at all.

Magdalen. We've been here under a hideous abstinence from diversions.

Mascarille. I'm at your service to wait on you some day or other to the play, if you'll give me leave; and indeed a new one is to be acted, which I should be glad that we might see together.

Magdalen. That is not to be refused.

Mascarille. But I beseech you to applaud it well, when we shall be at it; for I'm engaged to cry up the performance; the author visited me this morning to beg me so to do.—It's the custom here for authors to come and read their new performances to us people of distinction, that they may engage us to approve of them, and give them a reputation; and I leave you to imagine, whether, when we say anything, the pit dares contradict us.—For my part, I am very exact in this, and when I've promised any poet, always cry out, how excellent it is, before the candles are lighted.

Magdalen. Say no more of it, Paris is a wonderful place; an hundred things happen in it every day, which one knows not in the country, however witty one may be.

Cathos. 'Tis enough; now we are told, we'll do our part in crying out as we ought at every word that's said.

Mascarille. I don't know whether I'm mistaken; but you have all the looks of having written a play yourself.

Magdalen. Eh! there may be something in what you say.

Mascarille. Ah! Faith, we must see it.—Between ourselves, I've composed one which I'll have acted.

Cathos. Ay! which company of actors will you give it to?

Mascarille. A fine question truly!—to the actors of the Theatre Royal;—none but they are capable of gaining things a reputation; the rest are ignorant creatures, that speak their parts just as one talks: they don't understand to make the verses roar, or pause at a beautiful passage; how can it be known where the fine lines are, if the actor does not stop at them, and apprise you thereby to clap?

Cathos. Really, there's a way of making an audience sensible of the beauties of a performance, and things are well esteemed but according as they are well set off.

Mascarille. How d'ye like my trimming? D'ye think it suits my clothes?

Cathos. Perfectly.

Mascarille. The ribbon is well chosen.

Magdalen. Furiously well. It's a charming plum colour.

Mascarille. What say you of my rollers?

Magdalen. They have perfectly a good air.

Mascarille. I may boast however, that they're a quarter of a yard wider than any that have been made.

Magdalen. I must own I never saw the elegance of dress carried to such a height.

Mascarille. Employ the reflection of your smelling faculty a little upon these gloves.

Magdalen. They smell terribly fine.

Cathos. I never breathed an odour more agreeable.

Mascarille. And this here?

[*He gives them his powdered wig to smell too.*]

Magdalen. That is extremely noble; the sublime in it is touched deliciously.

Mascarille. You say nothing of my feathers. How d'ye like them?

Cathos. They're dreadfully beautiful.

Mascarille. D'ye know this little bit o' top cost me a louis d'or? for my part, I've the madness to be ready generally to give more than anybody for what's most excellent.

Magdalen. You and I sympathise, I assure you; I'm furiously delicate in everything I wear; and even to my very socks, I can't endure anything which is not by a good hand.

Mascarille. [*Crying out suddenly.*] O! O! O! gently, gently: —damme, ladies, this is very ill usage; I've reason to complain of your behaviour: this is not fair.

Cathos. How now! what's the matter wi' ye?

Mascarille. What! both against my heart at the same time, attacking me right and left? ha! —it's contrary to the law of nations, it's not an equal match, and I shall cry out murder.

Cathos. It must be owned, he says things in a particular manner.

Magdalen. He has an admirable turn of wit.

Cathos. You are more afraid than hurt, and your heart complains before 'tis wounded.

Mascarille. What the deuce! it's wounded from head to foot.

SCENE X

Cathos, Magdalen, Mascarille, Marot.

Marot. Madam, somebody asks to see you.

Magdalen. Who?

Marot. The Viscount Jodelet.

Mascarille. The Viscount Jodelet?

Marot. Yes, sir.

Cathos. Do you know him?

Mascarille. He's my best friend.

Magdalen. Conduct him in immediately.

Mascarille. It's some time since we have seen one another, and I'm overjoyed at this accident.

Cathos. Here he is.

SCENE XI

Cathos, Magdalen, Jodelet, Mascarille, Marot, Almanzor.

Mascarille. Ah, viscount!

Jodelet. [Embracing one another.] Ah, marquis!

Mascarille. How glad I am to meet you!

Jodelet. What joy I have to see you here!

Mascarille. Kiss me again a little, prithee.

Magdalen. [To *Cathos.*] We begin to be known, my dearest, see the beau-monde find the way to visit us.

Mascarille. Ladies, give me leave to present this gentleman to you. Upon my word, he deserves your knowledge.

Jodelet. 'Tis but just to come and render you what one owes, and your charms demand their sovereign rights from all sorts of people.

Magdalen. This is to drive your civilities even to the borders of flattery.

Cathos. This day ought to be marked in our almanac, as a very happy day.

Magdalen. [To *Almanzor.*] Come, boy, must things be always told you over and over? Don't you see there must be the addition of a chair?

Mascarille. Don't wonder to behold the viscount in this manner, he's but just recovered of an illness, which has made his visage pale, as you see.

Jodelet. 'Tis the fruit of court attendance, and the fatigues of war.

Mascarille. D'ye know, ladies, that in the viscount you behold one of the bravest men of the age?—he's a perfect hero.

Jodelet. Marquis, you're not behindhand with me; we know also what you can do.

Mascarille. It's true, we have seen one another upon occasion.

Jodelet. And in places where 'twas very warm.

Mascarille. [Looking at *Cathos* and *Magdalen*.] Ay, but not so warm as 'tis here. Ha, ha, ha.

Jodelet. Our acquaintance was made in the army, and the first time we saw each other, he commanded a regiment of horse aboard the galleys of Malta.

Mascarille. It's true; but for all that, you were before me in the service; and I remember, that I was but a little officer, when you commanded two thousand horse.

Jodelet. War is a fine thing; but, faith, the court nowadays rewards people that are of service like us very ill.

Mascarille. That's the reason I'll hang up my sword.

Cathos. For my part, I've a furious tenderness for men of the sword.

Magdalen. I love them too: but I'd have wit to temper bravery.

Mascarille. Do you remember, viscount, that half-moon we carried from the enemy at the siege of Arras.

Jodelet. What d'ye mean by an half-moon? it was a whole moon, indeed.

Mascarille. I think you're right.

Jodelet. I ought, faith, to remember it very well; I was there wounded in the leg by the burst of a grenade, of which I still carry the marks about me. Feel a little, pray; you'll be sensible what a wound it was.

Cathos. [Putting her hand to the place.] The scar is large, truly.

Mascarille. Give me your hand a moment, and feel this: there just in the back part of my head. Are you at it?

Magdalen. Ay, I feel something.

Mascarille. It's a musket-shot which I received the last campaign I made.

Jodelet. [Opening his bosom.] Here's a wound which went quite through me at the attack of Graveling.

Mascarille. [Putting his hand upon the button of his breeches.] I'm going to show you a furious wound.

Magdalen. There's no occasion for't, we believe you without seeing it.

Mascarille. They are honourable marks, that show what a body is.

Cathos. We make no doubt of what you are.

Mascarille. Viscount, have you your coach there?

Jodelet. Why?

Mascarille. We'll carry the ladies to take a walk without the gates, and give them a collation.

Magdalen. We can't go abroad to-day.

Mascarille. Let's have fiddles then and dance.

Jodelet. Faith, that's well thought of.

Magdalen. As for that we consent to it: but then there must be some addition of company.

Mascarille. Who's there?—Champagne, Picard, Bourgognon, Casquarat, Basque, la Verdure, Lorrain, Provençal, Violette.—I wish all footmen were at the devil!—I don't think there's a gentleman in France worse served than I. These rascals always leave me alone.

Magdalen. Almanzor, tell the servants of my lord marquis to go look for music, and fetch us the gentlemen and ladies hereabouts, to people the solitude of our ball.

[*Exit Almanzor.*]

Mascarille. Viscount, what say you of these eyes?

Jodelet. Why, marquis, what d'ye think of 'em yourself?

Mascarille. If I say, that our liberty will have much ado to get away clear from hence. At least, for my part, I receive strange pulls, and my heart is held only by one thread.

Magdalen. How natural is all he says! he turns things the most agreeably in the world.

Cathos. Really, he's at a furious expense of wit.

Mascarille. To show you I'm in earnest, I'll make an extempore upon it. [*He muses.*]

Cathos. O! I conjure you by all my soul holds sacred, let's have something made upon us.

Jodelet. I should be glad to do as much for you; but I find myself a little inconvenienced in the poetic vein, by the quantity of blood which for some days past I have caused to be taken from me.

Mascarille. What the devil is the matter? I always make the first verse well, but I'm perplexed about the rest. Faith, this is a little too hasty, I'll make you an extempore at my leisure, which you'll find to be the finest in the world.

Jodelet. He's as witty as the devil.

Magdalen. His wit's gallant and finely turned.

Mascarille. Viscount, tell me, is it long since you saw the countess?

Jodelet. It's above three weeks since I paid her a visit.

Mascarille. D'ye know that the duke came to see me this morning, and would have taken me into the country a stag-hunting with him?

Magdalen. Here come our friends.

SCENE XII

Lucilia, Celimena, Cathos, Magdalen, Mascarille, Jodelet, Marot, Almanzor, and Fiddlers.

Magdalen. Lard! my dears! we ask your pardon. These gentlemen had a fancy to put life into our heels, and we sent to seek for you to fill the emptiness of our assembly.

Lucilia. You have obliged us certainly.

Mascarille. This is here only a ball of a sudden; but one of these days we'll give you one in form. Are the fiddlers come?

Almanzor. Yes, sir, they're here.

Cathos. Come then, my dears, take your places.

Mascarille. [Dancing alone by way of prelude.] La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Magdalen. He has a shape perfectly elegant.

Cathos. And he looks as if he could dance finely.

Mascarille. [Having taken out Magdalen to dance.] My liberty is going to dance a courant as well as my heels. Play in time, fiddlers, in time. O what ignorant wretches! there's no dancing with 'em. The devil take ye, can't ye play in measure? La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la?

Jodelet. [Dancing afterwards.] Hold, don't play so fast, I'm but just recovered of a fit of illness.

SCENE XIII

Du Croisy, La Grange, Cathos, Magdalen, Lucilia, Celimena, Jodelet, Mascarille, Marot, and Fiddlers.

La Grange. [A stick in his hand.] Ah, ah, rogues, what d'ye do here? it's three hours we've been looking for you.

Mascarille. [Feeling himself beaten.] O! O! O! you didn't tell me the blows were to be included.

Jodelet. O! O! O!

La Grange. It's fit for you, indeed, rascal as you are, to pretend to be a man of consequence.

Du Croisy. This will teach you to know yourself.

SCENE XIV

Cathos, Magdalen, Lucilia, Celimena, Mascarille, Jodelet, Marot, and Fiddlers.

Magdalen. What's the meaning of this?

Jodelet. It's a wager.

Cathos. What, let yourselves be beaten in this manner?

Mascarille. Lard, I would not seem to take any notice of it; because I am violent, and should not have been able to command myself.

Magdalen. To suffer an affront like this in our presence!

Mascarille. It's nothing, let's not leave off. We've known one another a long while, and amongst friends one should not take pet for so small a matter.

SCENE XV

Du Croisy, La Grange, Magdalen, Cathos, Lucilia, Celimena, Mascarille, Jodelet, Marot, and Fiddlers.

La Grange. Faith, rascals, you shall not laugh at us, I promise you.—Come in, you there.

[Three or four bullies enter.]

Magdalen. What means this impudence, to come and disturb us thus in our own house?

Du Croisy. What, ladies, shall we bear to have our footmen received better than ourselves? Shall they come to make love to you at our expense, and present you with a ball?

Magdalen. Your footmen?

La Grange. Ay, our footmen; it's neither decent nor honest to debauch them for us, as you do.

Magdalen. O Heaven! what insolence!

La Grange. But they shall not have the advantage of our clothes to dazzle your eyes; if you will love them, it shall be, faith, for their handsome looks. Quick, let 'em be stripped immediately.

Jodelet. Farewell finery.

Mascarille. The marquisate and the viscountship are at an end.

Du Croisy. Ah, ah, rascals, have you the impudence to interfere with us? You shall seek wherewithal to make yourselves agreeable to your mistresses somewhere else, I assure you.

La Grange. It's too much to supplant us, and that with our own clothes.

Mascarille. O! fortune, how great is thy inconstancy.

Du Croisy. Quick, take everything away from 'em.

La Grange. Carry away these clothes, begone with 'em. Now, ladies, in the condition they are, you may continue your amours with 'em as long as you please; we leave you entirely

at liberty as to that, and this gentleman and I protest, we'll be in nowise jealous.

SCENE XVI

Magdalen, Cathos, Jodelet, Mascarille, and Fiddlers.

Cathos. Ah! what confusion!

Magdalen. I burst with vexation.

First Fiddler. [To *Mascarille*.] What's the meaning of this? who must pay us?

Mascarille Ask my lord the viscount.

First Fiddler. [To *Jodelet*.] Who's to give us the money?

Jodelet. Ask my lord the marquis.

SCENE XVII

Gorgibus, Magdalen, Cathos, Jodelet, Mascarille, and Fiddlers

Gorgibus. Ah! Baggages as you are, you have brought us into a rare condition, by what I can find; I've heard indeed of your fine doings from those gentlemen and ladies that went out just now.

Magdalen. Ah, father! it's a cruel trick they've played us.

Gorgibus. Ay, it's a cruel trick; but 'tis the effect of your impertinence, you wretches. They've shown their resentment for the usage you gave 'em; and yet unhappy that I am, I must put up the affront.

Magdalen. Ah! I swear we'll be revenged, or I shall die with the vexation of it. And you, rascals, dare you continue here after your insolence?

Mascarille. D'ye use a marquis thus? this is the way of the world, the least disgrace makes us be slighted by those that before caressed us. Come along, brother, let's go seek our fortune somewhere else; I see they like nothing here but insignificant outside, and have no regard for naked virtue.

SCENE XVIII

Gorgibus, Magdalen, Cathos, and Fiddlers.

First Fiddler. Sir, we expect that you should satisfy us, since they don't, for 'twas here we played.

Gorgibus. [Beating them.] Ay, ay, I'll satisfy ye, and here's the coin I'll pay ye in. And you, ye baggages, I don't know

what should hinder me from doing as much for you; we shall become the common talk and ridicule of everybody, and this is what you have brought upon yourselves, by your extravagances. Go hide yourselves, ye villains, go hide yourselves for ever. [*Alone.*] And you, that are the occasion of their folly, stupid trumpery, mischievous amusements for idle minds, ye romances, verses, songs, sonnets, and sonatas, the devil take ye all.

THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS

(A COMEDY)

THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS, *a Comedy of Three Acts in Verse, acted at Paris, at the Theatre of the Palace-Royal, June 24, 1661*

There are few pieces, especially of three acts, so simple, so polished, and so copious as this. Every scene produces a new incident, and these incidents, artfully unfolded, insensibly lead to one of the most beautiful catastrophes that was ever seen upon the French stage. *The Adelphi* of Terence only gave the hint to *The School for Husbands*. In *The Adelphi* two old men of opposite humours, one a father, and the other an uncle, gave a very, very different education, the one to his son, and the other to his nephew. In *The School for Husbands* are two guardians, who had each of them the care of bringing up a young girl, that was entrusted to them, the one of them being of a rigid temper, the other of an indulgent one. The French poet has improved upon the Latin one, in giving to his two characters, not only the concern of fathers, but of lovers likewise, an interest so exquisite and lively, that it forms a piece entirely new upon the simple plan of the ancient author.

ACTORS

SGANAREL, } brothers.
ARISTO, }
ISABELLA, } sisters.
LEONORA, }
VALÈRE, lover to Isabella
LISSETTA, waiting-woman to Leonora.
ERGASTE, valet to Valère.
COMMISSARY.
NOTARY.
Two Footmen.

SCENE: a public place in Paris.

ACT I

SCENE I

Sganarel, Aristo.

Sganarel. Pray brother, don't let us talk so much, but let each of us live according to his inclination; though you have the advantage over me in years, and are old enough to be wise, I must tell you, notwithstanding, that I don't intend to bear reproofs from you; that my fancy is the only director I have to follow, and I am well pleased with living after my own manner.

Aristo. But everybody condemns it.

Sganarel. Ay, fools like you, brother.

Aristo. Thank ye; the compliment is kind.

Sganarel. I'd fain know, since all must out, what these fine cavillers can find in me to reprove?

Aristo. That surly temper, the severity of which shuns all the pleasures of society, gives a whimsical air to all you do, and renders all about you barbarous, even to your very habit.

Sganarel. I should make myself a slave to the fashion to be sure, and it's not for myself that I ought to dress myself; —would you not, by your pretty tittle tattle stories, Mr. Elder Brother of mine, (for, thank Heaven, so you are by one twenty years, to tell you plainly, though it's not worth while to speak on't:) would you not, I say, in these things persuade me into the fashions of your young coxcombs? Oblige me to wear those little hats, which let their weak brains evaporate, and those powdered wigs, the vast business whereof obscures the figure of a human countenance? Those short jerkins but just below the arms, and those large bands hanging down even to the navel? Those sleeves, which one sees dip in the sauce at table, and those petticoats called breeches? those pretty shoes bedecked with ribbons, that make you look like rough-footed pigeons, and those large rollers, where, as in the stocks, the captive legs every morning are confined, and which make these accomplished gentlemen walk straddling as if they were flying? —I should delight you, without doubt, equipped in this manner; for you, I perceive, carry about you the same gewgaws that they do.

Aristo. One should always comply with the majority, and never make one's self be stared at. Either extreme is offensive; and every wise man in his clothes as well as his words, should have nothing too much affected, but with readiness follow whatever change custom introduces. I do not think one should imitate those one sees continually straining beyond the fashion, who are so fond of being in extremes, they would be uneasy should anybody go a step beyond them. But I hold it wrong, upon one's single opinion, to avoid obstinately what all the world pursues, and think it's better to be amongst the number of fools, than find one's self the only one on wisdom's side in opposition to everybody else.

Sganarel. Thus thinks an old fellow, who to impose upon the world conceals his grey hairs under a black periwig.

Aristo. It's a strange thing you always take such care to fling my age in my teeth, and that I must constantly find you blaming decency in me as well as cheerfulness: as if old age was condemned to give up all enjoyment, and ought to think of nothing else but dying. Or was not attended by enough that's disagreeable, without being also crabbed and slovenly.

Sganarel. Be it as it will, I'm resolutely determined to alter nothing of my dress. In spite of the fashion, I'll have a brim to my hat, under which my head may find a convenient shelter; a large long doublet, buttoned close as it ought to be, that it may keep the stomach warm to digest well; a pair of breeches made exactly to fit my thighs, and shoes wherein my feet may not be tortured; such as our forefathers wisely wore.—And whoever does not like me, need only shut his eyes.

SCENE II

Leonora, Isabella, Lisetta, Aristo, and Sganarel whispering together at the farther part of the stage, without being seen.

Leonora. [To Isabella.] I take it off on me, in case you should be chid.

Lisetta. [To Isabella.] What, for ever in a chamber without seeing anybody?

Isabella. Such is his humour.

Leonora. I pity you for it, sister.

Lisetta. [To Leonora.] It's well for you, madam, that his brother is quite of another temper, and fate was very kind to you, in making you fall into the hands of a man of reason.

Isabella. It's even a miracle, that he has not locked me up, or taken me out with him to-day.

Lisetta. Faith I should send him to the devil with his ruff, and—

Sganarel. [Being run against by Lisetta.] By your favour, whither are you going?

Leonora. We don't yet know; I was persuading my sister to walk out and enjoy the sweetness of this fine weather. But—

Sganarel. [To Leonora.] For your part, you may go whither you think proper; [Pointing to Lisetta.] you have nothing to do but ramble, both of you together; [To Isabella.] but as for you, madam, if you please, I forbid your going.

Aristo. Ah! brother, let's give 'em leave to go and divert themselves.

Sganarel. I'm your servant, brother.

Aristo. Youth would—

Sganarel. Youth is foolish, and old age too sometimes.

Aristo. D'ye imagine there's any harm in her being with Leonora?

Sganarel. No, but I think it still better for her to be with me.

Aristo. But—

Sganarel. But her actions must be under my direction: in short, I know it's my interest to take care of them.

Aristo. Am I less concerned in those of her sister?

Sganarel. Lack-a-day, every one judges and acts as he pleases. They have no relations, and our friend their father, at his last hour, committed the care of them to us, enjoining both of us either to marry them ourselves, or (should we refuse that,) to dispose of them at a proper age to others; by this contract, he meant to give us over them, from their childhood, the full authority both of father and husband. That you took the trouble of bringing up, and I charged myself with the care of this: you govern yours according to your own will, and, pray, give me leave to manage mine as I like best.

Aristo. Methinks—

Sganarel. Methinks, and I speak it aloud, that this is talking as I ought upon such a subject. You permit yours to flaunt about fine and tawdry:—with all my heart. Let her have both a footman and a waiting-woman—I agree to't. Let her gad abroad, love idleness, and be at liberty for the beaux to compliment;—I'm well contented with it;—but I'm resolved, mine shall live according to my fancy, and not her own; that she shall be clothed in a decent stuff, and wear black

only on holy days; that staying at home, like a discreet person, she shall apply herself entirely to affairs of housewifery, darn my linen at her leisure hours, or else knit stockings for her diversion; that she shall not listen to the discourse of coxcombs, nor ever stir abroad without somebody to watch her. In a word, the flesh is weak, I know what stories are told to that purpose, nor will I wear horns if I can help it; and since 'tis her fortune to marry me, I'm resolved to be as secure of her person as of my own.

Isabella. You have no reason, I believe——

Sganarel. Hold your tongue; I'll make you know whether you are to go abroad without me.

Leonora. What then, sir?

Sganarel. Lord, madam, no words; I don't talk to you, for you are overwise.

Leonora. Are you disturbed to find Isabella with us?

Sganarel. Why yes, to say the truth, you spoil her for me. Your visits here do nothing but displease me, and you'll oblige me if you'll make no more of 'em.

Leonora. Shall I likewise declare to you my real thoughts? I can't tell how she takes all this; but I'm sensible what effect suspicion would have on me. And though one mother bore us, we hardly can be sisters, if your constant behaviour produces any love in her.

Lisetta. Really, all these cautions are scandalous. Are we in Turkey that women must be locked up? For we are told they are kept like slaves there, and that 'tis for that those people are accused of Heaven. Our honour, sir, is weak indeed, if there's need of watching it continually. D'ye fancy, after all, that these precautions are any hindrance to our intentions? and when we've taken anything in our head, that the cunningest man is not an ass? All this vigilance is but a fool's dream; o' my faith, the surest way is to confide in us. He that confines us, brings himself into extreme danger; and our honour is always for guarding itself. It inspires us, as it were, with a desire of sinning, when so much care is taken to hinder us from it; and, should I find myself restrained by a husband, I should have an exceeding strong inclination to realise his apprehensions.

Sganarel. [To *Aristo.*] This is your way of education, good Mr. Teacher; and you can bear it without any emotion.

Aristo. Her discourse, brother, should only make one laugh; though there's some reason in what she says. Their sex loves to enjoy a little liberty, and they are kept from anything very

indifferently by so much austerity; distrustful cares, bolts and grates, make neither wives nor maidens virtuous. It is honour, not severity, must keep them to their duty. To speak sincerely, a woman who is discreet by force only, is a very strange thing. We pretend in vain to govern all their actions; it's the heart that must be gained, in my opinion; and take what care one can, I should not think my honour mighty safe in the hands of a person, to whom, amongst the assaults of temptation, nothing should be wanting but an opportunity of transgressing.

Sganarel. It's all idle stuff.

Aristo. So let it be then; but I always hold, that we should instruct youth with good humour, reprove its failings with great gentleness, and not make it afraid of the name of virtue. My cares for Leonora have been guided by these maxims; I've not made crimes of little liberties; I've continually complied with her youthful desires; and, thank Heaven, I don't repent of it. I've given her leave to see good company, diversions, plays, and balls; these are things, which, for my part, I always judge very proper to form the minds of young people; and the world is a school, which, in my opinion, teaches the way of living better than any book. She likes to spend money in clothes, linen, and new fashions;—what would you have me do? I endeavour to gratify her wishes; and these are pleasures one should allow young women when one's circumstances can afford it. The command of a father obliges her to marry me; but I don't intend to tyrannise over her. I know well enough that our years don't well suit, and leave her to her own choice entirely. If a thousand pounds a year well paid, a great deal of tenderness, and a complaisant regard, can in her opinion make amends in such a match for the difference between us as to age, she may take me for her husband; if not, let her choose elsewhere.—If she can be happier without me, I consent to it, and had rather see her married to another, than give her hand to me against her will.

Sganarel. How sweet he is! 'tis all sugar, all honey.

Aristo. In short, it's my humour, and I thank Heaven for it; I shall never follow those rigid maxims, which make children wish their parents dead.

Sganarel. But the liberty that's taken in youth cannot easily be abridged, and this way of thinking will be disagreeable to you, when her manner of living must be altered.

Aristo. And wherefore must it be altered?

Sganarel. Wherfore?

Aristo. Ay.

Sganarel. I don't know.

Aristo. Is there anything in it to prejudice one's honour?

Sganarel. What? if you marry her, shall she pretend to the same liberties which she took while she was a maid?

Aristo. Why not?

Sganarel. Will your love be so complaisant as to allow her patches and ribbons?

Aristo. Without doubt.

Sganarel. To let her run about like a mad creature to every ball and assembly?

Aristo. Yes, really.

Sganarel. And shall the beaux come to your house?

Aristo. And what then?

Sganarel. To make merry, and give entertainments?

Aristo. I consent to't.

Sganarel. And shall your wife hear their fine speeches?

Aristo. Ay.

Sganarel. And you'll behold these coxcombs' visits in such a manner, as may show you are under no concern about them?

Aristo. Certainly.

Sganarel. Go, you're an old fool.—[To *Isabella.*] Get you in, that you mayn't hear this infamous conduct.

SCENE III

Aristo, Sganarel, Leonora, Lisetta.

Aristo. I'll commit myself to the fidelity of my wife, and intend always to live as I have done.

Sganarel. How glad shall I be when he's a cuckold!

Aristo. I can't tell to what fortune I am born; but I know, that for your part, if you fail to be one, the fault must not be laid on you, for you have taken all the pains that can be towards it.

Sganarel. Laugh on, giggler; O what a pleasure it must give one to see a buffoon of almost sixty!

Leonora. I engage to preserve him from the fate you talk of, if I marry him; he may assure himself of it. But know that my heart would answer for nothing, was I to be your wife.

Lisetta. There's a conscience due to those that place a confidence in us; but it's delightful, really, to cheat such folks as you.

Sganarel. Be gone with your damned ill-bred tongue.

Aristo. You bring this ridicule on yourself, brother. Adieu, alter your temper, and be forewarned, that locking up a wife is a very wrong step.—Your servant.

Sganarel. I'm not yours.

SCENE IV

Sganarel. [Alone.] O how excellently they're all suited one to another! What a hopeful family! A senseless old fellow that acts the fop in a crazy worn-out carcass, a girl that's mistress, the arrantest coquette that can be, and impudent servants?—No, not even Wisdom herself could bring it about, she would lose all sense and reason to endeavour the regulation of such a family.—Isabella may lose those principles of honour she has imbibed with me amongst such acquaintance; and, in order to prevent it, I intend shortly to send her back again to my cabbages and my turkeys.

SCENE V

Valere, Sganarel, Ergaste.

Valere. [At the farther part of the stage.] There's the Argus that I abhor, Ergaste. The rigid guardian of her I adore.

Sganarel. [Thinking himself alone.] Is not the corruption of manners nowadays a thing that's in short surprising?

Valere. I'll speak to him, if I can, and endeavour to get acquainted with him.

Sganarel. Instead of seeing that severity prevail, of which in former times virtue so properly consisted, the young people hereabouts, debauched, without restraint, don't take—

Valere. He don't see 'tis him we bow to.

Ergaste. His blind eye is on this side perhaps;—let's get to the right side of him.

Sganarel. I must leave this place.—A city life can only produce in me the—

Valere. [Approaching him.] I must try to gain admittance to his house.

Sganarel. [Hearing a noise.] How! I thought somebody spake—in the country, Heaven be praised, these fashionable fooleries don't offend my eyes.

Ergaste. [To Valere.] Go up to him.

Sganarel. [Still hearing a noise.] What would he be at? My ears tingle.—There, all the amusements of our young

women go no further than—[*Seeing Valere bow.*] Is that to me?

Ergaste. Go nearer.

Sganarel. [Not minding Valere.] Thither no coxcomb comes.—[*Valere bows again.*] What the devil!—[Turns and sees *Ergaste bow on the other side.*] Again?—What mean these bows!

Valere. Accosting you in this manner, sir, interrupts you perhaps.

Sganarel. May be so.

Valere. But why so? the honour of your acquaintance is to me so great a happiness, so exquisite a pleasure, that I had a vast inclination to pay my respects to you.

Sganarel. Be it so.

Valere. To wait on you, and assure you, without any dissimulation, that I'm entirely at your service.

Sganarel. I believe so.

Valere. I've the good luck to be one of your neighbours, for which I am thankful to my happy destiny.

Sganarel. That's well done.

Valere. But, sir, d'ye hear the news which is current at court, and thought to be true?

Sganarel. What does it concern me?

Valere. True; however a man, sometimes, may be curious after novelties. Will you go see the magnificent preparations for the birth of our dauphin, sir?

Sganarel. If I think fit.

Valere. Paris, we own, affords us an hundred delightful pleasures which are nowhere else. The country is a solitude in comparison. How do you pass away the time?

Sganarel. About my business.

Valere. The mind should have some relaxation; it flags by too earnest an attention to serious things. What d'ye do in an evening before bedtime?

Sganarel. What I please.

Valere. Certainly; nothing could be said better; it's a reasonable answer, and good sense appears in never doing anything but what one pleases. If I thought you were not too much taken up, I should come to your house now and then after supper, to pass away the time.

Sganarel. Your servant.

SCENE VI

Valere, Ergaste.

Valere. What's your opinion of this whimsical fool?

Ergaste. He has a surly way of answering, and receives people like a bear.

Valere. Ah! how mad I am!

Ergaste. At what?

Valere. At what?—It provokes me to see her I love in the power of a savage, a watchful dragon, whose severity won't allow her any liberty.

Ergaste. That makes for you, and on the effect of it your passion must build its surest hopes. Know, for your encouragement, a woman that's watched is half won, and the peevishness of fathers and husbands has always forwarded the business of lovers. I intrigue very little, it is my least accomplishment, and I don't pretend to gallantry: but I've assisted twenty of your sportsmen, who often said, they were best pleased to meet with those churlish husbands, that never come home without grumbling, those arrant brutes, that without thought or reason condemn the conduct of their wives in everything, and haughtily assuming upon the name of husband, fall out with them for nothing in the company of their admirers.—One knows, say they, to make the best of these advantages; and the lady's indignation at such kind of usage, the soft complaining, the obliging condolence of the lover upon the occasion, afford an opportunity to push things far enough. In a word, the surliness of Isabella's keeper is a circumstance sufficiently favourable for you.

Valere. But for the four months that I have loved her passionately, I could never find one moment to converse with her.

Ergaste. Love quickens people's wits; though it has little effect on yours. If I had been—

Valere. Why, what could you have done? when she's never to be seen without that brute, and there are neither maids nor footmen in the house whom I might influence to assist my passion by the flattering temptation of a reward.

Ergaste. Doesn't she yet know then that you love her?

Valere. That's a matter which my heart's not yet informed of; wherever that churl has carried the fair one, she has seen me continually after her like a shadow, and my looks have endeavoured day by day to declare to her the violence of my passion. My eyes have spoken loudly to her; but who can inform me whether they could make their language be understood?

Ergaste. That language, 'tis true, may sometimes prove unintelligible, if it has neither writing nor speech for its interpreter.

Valere. What shall I do to get out of this extreme uneasiness, and learn if the fair one understands I love her?—Tell me some way.

Ergaste. That's what must be contrived. Let's go into your house a little, that we may consider on't better.

ACT II

SCENE I

Isabella, Sganarel.

Sganarel. Go, I know the house and person by the marks alone that you give me.

Isabella. [Aside.] O Heaven! be propitious to me, and favour, at this time, the artful contrivance of an innocent passion!

Sganarel. Don't you say you were told that he is called Valere?

Isabella. Yes.

Sganarel. Go, be easy. Get you in, and leave me to do't. I'll go talk immediately to this young rattle.

Isabella. [Going.] I'm about a very daring project for a young girl; but the unjust rigour wherewith I am treated, will be my excuse with every considerate person.

SCENE II

Sganarel. [Alone, knocking at the door, thinking it's Valcre's.] Let's lose no time. This is the place.—Who goes there?—Well, I'm thinking.—Soho, I say, soho, somebody, soho. I don't wonder, after this discovery, that he came thither just now in so complaisant a manner; but I'll be expeditious, and his foolish hope—

SCENE III

Valere, Sganarel, Ergaste.

Sganarel. [To Ergaste, who comes out hastily.] A plague on the lubberly ass, who plants himself like a stake directly before me, in order to fling me down.

Valere. Sir, I'm concerned——

Sganarel. Ah! 'tis you I look for.

Valere. Me, sir?

Sganarel. You. Isn't your name Valere?

Valere. Yes.

Sganarel. I come to talk with you, if you think fit.

Valere. Can I be so happy as to do you any service?

Sganarel. No, but I myself intend to do a good turn for you; and that's what brings me to your house.

Valere. To my house, sir?

Sganarel. To your house; need you be so astonished at that?

Valere. I have reason to be so, and my soul is transported at the honour——

Sganarel. Let's ha' done with that honour, I pray you.

Valere. Won't you walk in?

Sganarel. There's no occasion for it.

Valere. Sir, pray now.

Sganarel. No; I'll not go a step farther.

Valere. Whilst you stay here, I cannot hear you.

Sganarel. I won't stir.

Valere. Well, I must submit.——Since the gentleman is resolved upon't, bring a chair hither, quickly.

Sganarel. I'll talk standing.

Valere. Can I suffer you in this manner!

Sganarel. Oh! it's a terrible force upon you!

Valere. Such rudeness would be too inexcusable.

Sganarel. Nothing can be so rude as not to hear people that would speak to us.

Valere. I obey you then.

Sganarel. You can't do better. [They use abundance of compliments about putting on their hats.] There is little need of so much ceremony.——Will you hear me?

Valere. Without doubt, and very gladly.

Sganarel. Answer me then.——Do you know that I am the guardian of a young woman, tolerably handsome, who lodges in this neighbourhood, and is called Isabella?

Valere. Yes.

Sganarel. If you know it, I need not inform you.——But do you know likewise, that being sensible of her charms, I'm concerned for her in another manner than as a guardian, and that she is destined to the honour of my bed?

Valere. No.

Sganarel. Then I inform you of that; and, that it's very fit you should not disturb her with your passion.

Valere. Who, I sir?

Sganarel. Ay, you.—Let's have no dissembling.

Valere. Who told you that I had a passion for her?

Sganarel. People that one may give some credit to.

Valere. But who, pray?

Sganarel. She herself.

Valere. She!

Sganarel. Ay, she. Is that saying enough?—Like an honest girl, that has loved me from her childhood, she told me all, just now; and more than that, charged me to let you know, that since she has been followed everywhere by you, her heart, which your pursuit exceedingly offends, has understood but too well the language of your eyes; that your secret wishes are discovered to her sufficiently; and that it's giving yourself a needless trouble to endeavour at explaining a passion further, which is contrary to that affection she reserves for me.

Valere. Is it she, d'ye say, that from herself made you—

Sganarel. Ay,—come to give you this frank and true account; and that having observed the violent love which disturbs your mind, she would sooner have let you know her thoughts, if, under such emotion of soul, she could have found anybody to send this message by; but that, at last, the vexation of being under a strict confinement, brought her to make use of me, to apprise you, as I have told you that her affection must not be granted to anybody else but me; that you have ogled her long enough, and that, if you have ever so little understanding, you will take some other measures.—Farewell, till I see you again.—This is what I had to inform you of.

Valere. [Low.] What say you to this adventure, Ergaste?

Sganarel. [Low aside.] He's much surprised.

Ergaste. [Low to Valere.] 'Tis my opinion, there's nothing in it to displease you, but that some subtle mystery is concealed under it. And in short, that this message does not come from one who would destroy the love she inspires in you.

Sganarel. [Aside.] He takes it right.

Valere. [Low to Ergaste.] You judge it to be mysterious.

Ergaste. [Low.] Yes—but he observes us, let us get out of his sight.

SCENE IV

Sganarel. [Alone.] How his confusion is visible in his countenance! He looked for no such message, to be sure.—Let's call Isabella, she shows what effect education has upon the mind. Virtue is all she cares for, and her heart is so entirely full on't, that the very looks of a man displease her.

SCENE V

Isabella, Sganarel.

Isabella. [To herself entering.] I'm afraid my lover is so full of his passion, that he does not comprehend the intention of my message; and since I'm such a prisoner, I'll run the risk of another that may speak my meaning plainer.

Sganarel. Here I'm come back.

Isabella. Well.

Sganarel. Your message has had its full effect; your man's business is done. He would have denied that his heart was sick with love, but when I assured him I came from you, he was struck immediately dumb and confounded, and I don't believe he'll come any more hither.

Isabella. Ha! What is it you tell me? I very much apprehend the contrary, and that he's again cutting out more work for us.

Sganarel. What reason have you for this apprehension?

Isabella. You were hardly got out of doors, when, putting my head out at window to take the air, I saw a young fellow at yonder turning, who came very surprisingly, to wish me a good morning from that impudent fellow, and flung a box directly into my chamber, in which was a letter sealed like a *billet-doux*. —I would instantly have thrown it back to him, but he was got to the end of the street, and my heart swells with vexation at it.

Sganarel. Observe a little the cunning, the knavery!

Isabella. It's my duty to send back immediately the box and letter to this cursed lover, and I shall want somebody for that purpose, for to make bold with you—

Sganarel. On the contrary, dearie, it convinces me the better of your affection and fidelity; my heart accepts the office with joy, and you oblige me by it more than I am able to express.

Isabella. Take it then.

Sganarel. Well, let's see what he could write to you.

Isabella. O Heavens! Take care not to open it.

Sganarel. Why so.

Isabella. Would you give him reason to believe 'twas I?

-A woman of honour ought always to avoid reading the letters a man sends her; the curiosity one then discovers, shows a secret pleasure in hearing one's self commended; and I think it proper this letter should immediately be carried to him, sealed up as it is, that he may so much the better learn how greatly my heart despises him; that his passion may lose all kind of hope henceforward, and no more attempt the like extravagance.

Sganarel. She has certainly reason for what she says.—Well, your virtue and discretion charm me. I perceive that my instructions are rooted in your soul: and in short, you show that you deserve to be my wife.

Isabella. I would not, however, balk your curiosity. You have got the letter, and you may open it.

Sganarel. Lack-a-day, I don't care;—no, your reasons are too good for that, and I am just going to discharge the trust you put in me; afterwards I shall step a little way to speak a word or two, and then come back to make you easy.

SCENE VI

Sganarel. [Alone.] How my soul overflows with joy to find her such a prudent girl! She's a treasure of honour in my family! to take the glances of love for treason, receive a *billet-doux* as a very great injury, and send it back again to her gallant by me! I'd fain know, whether upon such an occasion my brother's damsel would have acted thus. Faith, girls are just what they are taught to be.—Soho.

[Knocking at Valere's door.

SCENE VII

Sganarel, Ergaste.

Ergaste. Who's there?

Sganarel. Take this; and tell your master that he must not any more impertinently presume to write letters and send them with golden boxes, and that Isabella is violently enraged about it. See, she has not so much as opened it. He'll find the regard she has for his passion, and what happy success he ought to hope from it.

SCENE VIII

*Valere, Ergaste.**Valere.* What has that surly brute been giving you?*Ergaste.* This letter, sir, which, with this box, he pretends that Isabella received from you, and about which, he says, she's in a very great fury. It's without opening that she returns it you: read it quickly, and let's see if I'm mistaken.*Valere.* [Reads.] "This letter will no doubt surprise you: and both the design of writing and the manner of getting it to you, may be thought very rash in me. But I find myself in a situation not to observe forms any longer. The just dread of a marriage wherewith I am threatened in six days, makes me run all risks: and being resolved to free myself by some means or other, I believed, that I ought rather to choose you than despair. However, don't imagine, that you are wholly obliged to my evil destiny: it is not the constraint I am under that gives birth to the sentiments I have for you; but it's that which hastens the discovery of them, and makes me pass over those formalities which the decency of my sex requires. It depends on yourself alone to have me speedily yours, and I wait only till you show me what your love designs, before I let you know the resolution I have taken. But above all, remember that time is pressing, and that two hearts in love should understand each other by half a word."*Ergaste.* Well, sir, is not this contrivance an original? For a young creature, her understanding in this affair is not amiss. Would one believe her capable of these love stratagems?*Valere.* Ah! I find her perfectly adorable! This stroke of her wit and friendship even doubles my passion for her; and adds to the sentiments wherewith her beauty inspires me.*Ergaste.* The bubble's coming; consider what you must say to him.

SCENE IX

*Sganarel, Valere, Ergaste.**Sganarel.* [Thinking himself alone.] O thrice, and four times blest be this edict which forbids extravagance in dress! The uneasiness of husbands will be no more so grievous, and wives will now be limited in their demands. Oh! how I'm obliged to the king for this decree! And, for the satisfaction of the said husbands, how I wish that coquetry was forbidden as well as

laces and embroidery. I have bought the edict on purpose for Isabella to read to me; and that, for want of other employment, shall be our diversion by and by after supper. [Seeing *Valere*.] Will you send love-letters with golden boxes again, Mr. Foppington? You surely thought to find some young coquette, fond of intrigues, and easily melted down by flattery; but you see with what an air your presents are received; and take my word for't, it is spending your powder to kill sparrows. She's discreet; she loves me; and she's affronted at your passion; away, bag and baggage, therefore, and form your designs elsewhere.

Valere. Ay, indeed, sir, your merit, to which everybody yields, is too powerful an obstacle to my addresses; and it is foolishness in me, sincere as my passion is, to contend with you for Isabella's love.

Sganarel. It is true, 'tis a folly.

Valere. Nor should I have devoted my heart to the pursuit of her beauty, could I have foreseen that this wretched heart should find a rival so formidable as you.

Sganarel. I believe it.

Valere. Now I have no room for hope:—to you, sir, I give place, and that too without murmuring.

Sganarel. You do well.

Valere. Reason will have it so; for so much virtue shines in you, that I should be in the wrong to behold with an angry eye the tender sentiments Isabella has for you.

Sganarel. That's to be supposed.

Valere. Yes, yes, I give place to you. But, sir, I beseech you, (and it's the only favour a miserable lover begs, whose present torment you alone occasion:) I conjure you then, to assure Isabella, that if for three months past my soul has loved her, its passion has been pure and spotless, and never had a thought which her honour could reasonably be displeased at.

Sganarel. Ay.

Valere. That having nothing but my own inclinations to gratify, all my designs were to obtain her for a wife, if, in you, who captivate her heart, fate had not opposed an obstacle to this just passion.

Sganarel. Mighty well.

Valere. That, happen what will, she must not imagine I can e'er forget her charms; that in what manner soever I must submit to the decrees of Heaven, I'm destined to love her even to my latest gasp; and that, if anything stifles my addresses, it is the just regard I have for your merit.

Sganarel. That's wisely said, and I'm going to inform her of this discourse, which won't be disagreeable; but if you'll trust to me, endeavour earnestly to drive this passion out of your head.—Farewell.

Ergaste. Excellent bubble!

SCENE X

Sganarel. [Alone.] I'm very sorry for this poor good-natured wretch; but 'twas unhappy for him to think of taking a fort that I had conquered. [*Sganarel knocks at his door.*

SCENE XI

Sganarel, Isabella.

Sganarel. Never lover discovered such uneasiness at a letter sent back unopened: his hopes, in short, are quite destroyed, and he's withdrawn. But he earnestly conjured me to acquaint you, that in loving you, his passion has been pure and spotless, and never had a thought which your honour could reasonably be displeased at; and that having only his own inclinations to gratify, all his desires were to obtain you for a wife, if, in me who captivate your heart, fate had not opposed an obstacle to his sincere passion; that, let what will befall, you must not imagine your charms can ever be forgotten by him; that whatsoever decrees of Heaven he must submit to, he is destined to love you even to the latest gasp; and that, if anything stifles his addresses, it is the just regard he has for my merit. These are his own words, and so far from blaming him, I think him an honest fellow, and pity him for loving you.

Isabella. [Softly.] I am not mistaken in my belief of his passion; his looks assured me always of its innocence.

Sganarel. What d'ye say?

Isabella. That it's unkind to me to pity a man so much whom I hate to death; and that if you loved me, as you say you do, you'd be sensible how I'm affronted by his addresses.

Sganarel. But he didn't know your mind; and for the honesty of his intention, his love does not deserve—

Isabella. Is it a good intention, pray now, to think to run away with people? Is it like a man of honour to form designs of taking me from you, and marrying me by force, as if I was a creature that could bear life after such infamy being thrown upon me?

Sganarel. How?

Isabella. Yes, really, this base lover, I understand, talks of running away with me; but I can't imagine, for my part, by what secret means he learned so soon that you designed to marry me at farthest in eight days, since it was but yesterday you told me so; but, it's reported, he'll prevent that day which should unite your fate and mine.

Sganarel. That signifies nothing.

Isabella. O! pardon me; he's a very honest man, and does not retain for me—

Sganarel. He's in the wrong, and this is carrying the jest too far.

Isabella. Come, your mildness encourages his folly. If, just now, he had found you talk roundly to him, he would have dreaded your rage and my resentment, for it is even since his letter was rejected, that he spoke of this scandalous design; and, as far as I perceive, his passion makes him still imagine that my heart approves of him, that I avoid marrying you, whatever the world may think of it, and that I should with joy find myself out of your clutches.

Sganarel. He's a fool.

Isabella. Before you he knows how to disguise himself, and his intention is to amuse you. But be certain the traitor imposes upon you with his fair speeches. I am very unhappy, I'm sure, that notwithstanding all my endeavours to live with honour, and repulse the addresses of a vile seducer, I must be exposed to the vexation of his infamous attempts upon me.

Sganarel. Well, don't fear anything.

Isabella. For my part, I assure you, that unless you show yourself exceeding angry at so impudent an attempt, and quickly find out some way to free me from the persecutions of such a rash creature, I'll give up everything, and not endure the affronts which I receive from him.

Sganarel. Come, don't afflict thyself so much, my dearie; I'll go find him out and sing him such a tune.

Isabella. However, tell him, that denying it is to no purpose, for I was informed of his design by a good hand; and that after this notice, I dare defy him to surprise me, whatever he may attempt. In short, that without farther loss of time and trouble, he may be sensible what my sentiments are towards you, and, that, if he would avoid making mischief, he mustn't want being told the same thing twice.

Sganarel. I'll tell him what's proper.

Isabella. But do it in a tone that may show him it really comes from my very soul.

Sganarel. Well, I'll forget nothing, I warrant ye.

Isabella. I'm impatient for your return. Pray make all the haste you can. I languish if you're from my sight one moment.

Sganarel. Go, my heart's delight, I'll be back instantly.

SCENE XII

Sganarel. [Alone.] Is there a better or discreeter person?

-Ah! how happy I am, and what a joy it is to find a wife according to my own wish! Ay, thus wives ought to be, and not like some I know, downright coquettes, that suffer themselves to be courted, and make their honest husbands be pointed at through all Paris. [Knocking at Valere's door.] Soho, there, where's this fine enterprising spark of ours?

SCENE XIII

Valere, Sganarel, Ergaste.

Valere. Sir, what brings you here again?

Sganarel. Your follies.

Valere. How?

Sganarel. You very well know what I want to talk about. To tell you plainly, I took you to have more sense. You come to amuse me with your fine speeches, and secretly retain your own foolish hopes. I was inclinable, d'ye see, to use you gently, but at last you'll force me into a passion. Are you not ashamed, considering who you are, to contrive in your mind such projects as you do, to intend running away with a woman of honour, and interrupting a marriage which her whole happiness depends on?

Valere. Who told you this wonderful news, sir?

Sganarel. No dissembling. I have it from Isabella; who, for the last time, sends you word by me, that she has plainly enough discovered to you whom she chooses; that her heart, which is entirely mine, is enraged at such a contrivance; that she'd rather die than suffer such an insult; and that you'll occasion terrible doings, unless you put an end to all this uneasiness.

Valere. If she really said what you inform me, I own my passion can pretend to nothing farther. These expressions are

clear enough to let me see all is over, and I must revere the sentence she has passed.

Sganarel. If? D'ye make a doubt on't then, and fancy all the complaints I've brought from her to you are mere pretences? Will you have her tell you her own mind? To set you right, I willingly consent to't. Follow me, you shall see if I have added anything, and if her youthful heart is in suspense between us.

[*Going to knock at his own door.*

SCENE XIV

Isabella, Sganarel, Valere, Ergaste.

Isabella. How? D'ye bring him to me? What is't you mean? D'ye take his part against me? And, charmed with his rare qualities, will you force me to love him, and endure his visits?

Sganarel. No, honey, I set too great a value on your heart for that; but he imagines what I told him to be an arrant fiction, he believes 'tis from myself I speak, and that I cunningly represent you full of hate towards him, and tenderness for me; wherefore, from your own mouth I would cure him infallibly of a mistake which encourages his passion.

Isabella. What, does not my soul fully declare its meaning to you, and can you still be doubtful whom I love?

Valere. Indeed, madam, whatever the gentleman said to me from you might well surprise me. I was in doubt, I own, and that final sentence which determines the fate of my unbounded passion, must be so sensibly felt by me, that it can be no offence if I desire the repetition of it.

Isabella. No, no; you must not wonder at such a sentence; he told you my very thoughts, and I conceive them founded on reason sufficient to prove how sincere they are. Yes, indeed, I'd have it known, and I ought to be credited, that fate here presents two objects to my view, which inspiring me with different sentiments, agitate all the passions of my soul. One, by a reasonable choice, whereto honour engages me, possesses all my esteem and love; and the other, in return for his affection, has all my anger and my aversion. The one's presence is agreeable and dear to me, and fills my soul with joy; but the sight of t'other inspires my heart with secret emotions both of hatred and horror. To see myself the wife of one is all my desire, and I had rather lose my life than be married to the other. But 'tis sufficient that I declare my real sentiments, and languish

too long under these cruel torments; the person I love must now exert his diligence to destroy entirely the hopes of him I hate, and deliver me by a happy marriage from a punishment I dread much more than death.

Sganarel. Ay, my dearie, I intend to satisfy thy wish.

Isabella. It's the only way to make me easy.

Sganarel. You shall be so shortly.

Isabella. I know 'tis indecent for young women to declare their love so freely.

Sganarel. No, no.

Isabella. But in the condition fate has placed me, these liberties may be allowed; and I can, without a blush, make this tender acknowledgment to him whom I already consider as my husband.

Sganarel. Ay, my poor dear child, my soul's delight.

Isabella. Then pray let him think of proving his passion for me.

Sganarel. Ay, there, kiss my hand.

Isabella. Without further courtship, let him conclude a marriage, which I heartily desire, and accept the assurance I now give him that I'll never hearken to the vows of any other person.

[*She pretends to embrace Sganarel, and gives her hand to Valere to kiss.*

Sganarel. Ha, ha, my pretty face, my poor dear honey. You shall not pine very long, I promise you. Go, say no more. [To *Valere.*] You see I don't make her speak; she's fond of none but me.

Valere. Well, madam, very well, your meaning is plain enough. I learn by this discourse what it is you urge me to; and ere long I shall be able to remove from your presence him who gives you this great disturbance.

Isabella. You can't oblige me more agreeably, for, in short, the sight of him is grievous to endure; 'tis hateful to me, and the horror is so great—

Sganarel. So so.

Isabella. Does my talking thus displease you? Do I—

Sganarel. Alas, by no means, I don't say that; but, without lying, I'm sorry for his condition, and your aversion shows itself too violently.

Isabella. I can't show it too much on such an occasion.

Valere. Well. You shall be satisfied; and after three days never more shall your eyes behold the hated object.

Isabella. Heaven grant it! Adieu.

Sganarel. I pity your misfortune: but—

Valere. Nay, you shall hear no complaint at all from me; the lady certainly does justice to us both, and I'll endeavour to satisfy her wishes.—Adieu.

Sganarel. Poor young fellow! his affliction is excessive. Come, embrace me, for I'm your second self.

SCENE XV

Isabella, Sganarel.

Sganarel. I think he's greatly to be pitied.

Isabella. Pho, not at all.

Sganarel. As for the rest, dearie, your love touches me to the last degree, and I'm desirous it should be rewarded. Eight days are too long to stay considering your impatience; I'll marry you to-morrow, and won't invite—

Isabella. To-morrow?

Sganarel. You pretend reluctance out of modesty, but I know what joy my saying so gives you, and you wish it was already done.

Isabella. But—

Sganarel. Let's go get all things ready for this wedding.

Isabella. [Aside.] O Heaven assist me how to hinder it!

ACT III

SCENE I

Isabella. Yes, death, methinks, is an hundred times less dreadful than this fatal marriage, whereto I'm forced; and whatsoe'er I do to avoid the terrors of it, ought to find some favour with those that censure me. Time presses. It's night, let me go with courage, and commit my fortune to a lover's fidelity.

SCENE II

Sganarel, Isabella.

Sganarel. [Speaking to the people in the house.] I'm returned, and to-morrow I'll send—

Isabella. O Heaven!

Sganarel. Is it you, dearie? Whither d'ye go so late? You told me when I left you, that being a little weary you'd shut yourself in your chamber; nay, you desired that at my coming back I'd let you be at quiet till to-morrow morning.

Isabella. It's true: but—

Sganarel. But what?

Isabella. I'm in confusion you see, nor know I how to excuse it to you.

Sganarel. How so! What can this mean?

Isabella. A wonderful secret. 'Tis my sister now obliges me to go abroad, who, with a design for which I have blamed her very much, desired my chamber of me where I have locked her up.

Sganarel. For what purpose?

Isabella. Could one believe it? She's in love with this spark we have discarded.

Sganarel. With Valere?

Isabella. Desperately. Nothing can equal the greatness of her passion. You may judge how exceeding violent it is, by her coming hither alone at this hour to discover the anguish of her love to me, and to tell me that she certainly shall die unless she may obtain what her soul so much desires; that for above a year their amour has secretly been carried on with warmth and spirit; and that, at the very beginning of their fondness, they engaged themselves to each other by a mutual promise of marriage.

Sganarel. A villain!

Isabella. That being informed to what despair I have driven the man whose sight she dotes on, she came to beg I'd permit her passion to prevent a separation which would pierce her soul, and give her leave to entertain the spark this evening in my name at my chamber-window that looks into the little street, where, counterfeiting my voice, she may talk a little kindly to him, and thereby tempt his stay; in short, that she may dexterously manage to her own advantage the regard he's known to have for me.

Sganarel. And d'ye think that?—

Isabella. For my part, I'm provoked at it. What, sister, said I, are you out of your wits? Are you not ashamed to be thus in love with one of these sort of people, who change every day? To forget your sex, and deceive the hope of a man whom Heaven has appointed for you?

Sganarel. He well deserves it, and I am very glad on't.

Isabella. In short, my vexation made use of an hundred reasons to reproach her for so much baseness, and enable me to refuse what she this night requested; but I found her desires so importunate, she shed so many tears, fetched so many sighs, and so often told me I should drive her to despair if I denied to gratify her passion, that, in spite of my teeth, my heart was forced to yield; and to justify this night's intrigue, which a tenderness for my own blood made me give way to, I was going to get Lucretia to come and lie with me, whose virtues you daily praise so much; but you surprised me by this quick return.

Sganarel. No, no, I won't have all this juggling at my house; I could agree to't so far as it concerns my brother, but they may be seen by somebody in the street, and she whom I honour with my person should not only be modest and well-bred, but she must not even be suspected. Let's go turn out the shameless creature; and for her passion—

Isabella. Ah! you'll put her in too great confusion, and she may justly complain how little secrecy I'm mistress of. Since I must not countenance her design, stay here at least till I send her going.

Sganarel. Well then, do so.

Isabella. But above all things conceal yourself, I beseech you, and let her go without speaking one word to her.

Sganarel. Ay, for thy sake I'll restrain my anger; but the very instant she's got without the door, I'll go find my brother. 'Twill delight me to run and tell him this affair.

Isabella. I conjure you then not to mention my name. Good night t'ye, for I'm going to shut myself up this moment.

Sganarel. Until to-morrow, my life. [*Alone.*] How impatient am I to see my brother, and inform him of this accident! The good man is choused with all his wisdom, and I would not be without this discovery for an hundred crowns.

Isabella. [*In the house.*] Yes, sister, I'm sorry to incur your displeasure, but it's impossible for me to gratify you; my honour, which is dear to me, runs too great a risk by it; adieu; be gone before it is too late.

Sganarel. There she goes. She's a pretty kind of a plague, I warrant ye. Let's lock the door, for fear she should come back again.

Isabella. [*Entering.*] Oh Heaven! forsake me not in my designs!

Sganarel. [*Aside.*] Whither can she be going? Let's follow her a little.

Isabella. [Aside.] The night, however, favours me in my distress.

Sganarel. [Aside.] To the spark's lodgings! What an enterprise is this!

SCENE III

Valere, Isabella, Sganarel.

Valere. [Coming out hastily.] Yes, yes, I'll try some way this very night to speak.—Who's there?

Isabella. Make no noise, Valere, you are prevented, and I am Isabella.

Sganarel. You lie, you baggage, 'tis not she. She follows closely those laws of honour which you forsake, and you assume falsely both her name and voice.

Isabella. But was it not that you by holy matrimony—

Valere. Indeed, that is the only purpose of my destiny; and here I make you a solemn promise, that to-morrow I'll go where'er you please to perform the ceremony.

Sganarel. [Aside.] Poor self-cozened fool!

Valere. Go in securely. I now defy the power of your deluded guardian; and before he shall take you from my passion this arm shall pierce his heart with a thousand strokes.

SCENE IV

Sganarel. [Alone.] Oh! I have no inclination, I assure you, to take from you a shameless creature enslaved to her passion; I'm not jealous of your promise to her, and believe me, you shall be her husband. Ay, let's catch him with this impudent creature. The memory of her father, well worthy of respect, together with the great interest I have in her sister, require my endeavours at least to preserve her honour.—Soho.

[Knocking at a commissary's door.

SCENE V

Sganarel, the Commissary, the Notary, Attendant with a flambeau.

Commissary. Who's there?

Sganarel. Your servant, Mr. Commissary; we want a cast of your office; please to follow me with your light.

Commissary. We're going to—

Sganarel. The affair's in great haste.

Commissary. What is't?

Sganarel. To go in there, and surprise two people together, who must be honestly married. 'Tis a girl of ours whom one Valere has deceived, and got into his house by promising her marriage. She comes of a noble and virtuous family, but—

Commissary. If it's for that, our meeting is very lucky, for here's a notary with us.

Sganarel. Sir?

Notary. Yes, sir, a public notary.

Commissary. And also a man of honour.

Sganarel. That's supposed without your saying so. Go in at that door, make no noise but mind that nobody gets out. You shall be fully satisfied for your pains; but don't suffer yourselves to be greased in the fist however.

Commissary. How? D'ye then believe that an officer of justice—

Sganarel. I don't say it as a reflection upon your office. I'll fetch my brother hither immediately. Let the flambeau light me. [Aside.] I'll go congratulate this man of patience. Soho.

[Knocking at Aristo's door.]

SCENE VI

Aristo, Sganarel.

Aristo. Who knocks?—Oh! brother, what d'ye want?

Sganarel. Come along, sweet Mr. Director, I'll show you something that's pretty, superannuated fop.

Aristo. How?

Sganarel. I bring you good news.

Aristo. What is it?

Sganarel. Where's your Leonora pray?

Aristo. Wherefore that question? She's at a friend's house, I believe, at a ball.

Sganarel. Hey! ay, ay, follow me. You shall see what kind of ball the gentlewoman's gone to.—

Aristo. What d'ye mean?

Sganarel. You have brought her up mighty well. It's not right to be always finding fault; much gentleness wins the mind; and distrustful cares, bolts, and grates make neither wives nor maidens virtuous. The sex requires a little liberty, and by such severity we occasion them to do amiss. She has really taken her fill of it, a cunning baggage, and virtue with her is grown exceeding gentle.

Aristo. What's the drift of this discourse?

Sganarel. Come, Mr. Elder Brother of mine, it's what you well deserve; and I would not for twenty pistoles, but that you should have this fruit of your silly maxims. It's plain what effect our instructions have produced on two sisters: one flies from gallants, and the other runs after them.

Aristo. Unless you make this riddle clearer to me—

Sganarel. The riddle is, that her ball is at Mr. Valere's, that I saw her go thither by night, and that at this present time she's in his arms.

Aristo. Who?

Sganarel. Leonora.

Aristo. Leave off your bantering, I beseech you.

Sganarel. Bantering! 'tis very good to hear him talk of bantering: poor soul! I tell you again and again, that Valere has got your Leonora at his house, and that they were engaged by a mutual promise before he thought of following Isabella.

Aristo. This story is so highly improbable.

Sganarel. He won't believe it, though he sees it. It makes me mad. Years signify nothing when folks want it here.

[*Pointing to his forehead.*

Aristo. What! brother, would you have—

Sganarel. Lack-a-day! I'd ha' nothing: only follow me, your mind shall presently be made easy. You shall see if I impose on you, and if they have not been contracted for more than a year past.

Aristo. Is it likely she should consent to this engagement without apprising me of it! Me, who always from her infancy upon every occasion have practised towards her a perfect complaisance, and an hundred times have protested never to force her inclinations.

Sganarel. In short, your own eyes shall judge of the matter. I've already fetched a commissary and a notary, it's our interest that the honour she has lost should be repaired upon the spot by marriage; for I don't imagine you'll be so mean-spirited to make her your wife with this stain upon her, unless you have some new arguments to place you above ridicule.

Aristo. I shall never be so exceeding weak to desire the possession of a heart against its will. But after all I can't believe—

Sganarel. What a talking you make! come along, this dispute would last for ever.

SCENE VII

The Commissary, the Notary, Sganarel, Aristo.

Commissary. Here's no occasion for compulsion, gentlemen; if you only wish to have 'em married, you need be no more uneasy, for they both are equally inclined to it. And, as to what concerns you, Valere has given it under his hand already, that he designs for his wife, her who now is with him.

Aristo. The girl—

Commissary. Is locked up, and won't come out, unless you consent to gratify their desires.

SCENE VIII

Valere, the Commissary, the Notary, Sganarel, Aristo.

Valere. [At the window.] No, gentlemen, nor shall anybody enter here till your pleasure be known to me. You are sensible who I am, and I have done my part in signing the instrument, which they may show you. If it's your intention to agree to the match, you must likewise set your hand to a confirmation of it; but, if not, depend upon't, you shall kill me sooner than take from me the object of my love.

Sganarel. Nay, we don't design to separate you from her. [Aside.] He's not yet undeceived, as to Isabella, let's take advantage of the mistake.

Aristo. [To Valere.] But is that Leonora?

Sganarel. [To Aristo.] Hold your tongue.

Aristo. But—

Sganarel. Be quiet.

Aristo. I would know—

Sganarel. What, again? hold your tongue, I tell you.

Valere. In short, whatever be the consequence, Isabella has my solemn promise, as I have hers, and I am not a match, considering all things, which you shall be admitted to disapprove.

Aristo. [To Sganarel.] What he says is not—

Sganarel. Hold your tongue; I have a reason for't: and you shall know the secret. Well, without any more words, both of us consent that you shall marry her who is at present with you.

Commissary. 'Tis in those terms the thing is drawn; and there's a blank for the name, since we did not see her.—Come, set your hands; the lady will make you all friends afterwards.

Valere. I agree to't in that manner.

Sganarel. And, for my part, I like it mightily. [Aside.]

We shall have rare laughing by and by. There, sign it first, brother, that honour belongs to you.

Aristo. But what all this mystery—

Sganarel. Pox o' your impertinence! Come, sign, you simpleton.

Aristo. He talks of Isabella, and you of Leonora.

Sganarel. Don't you consent, brother, if 'tis she, to let 'em make good their mutual promises?

Aristo. Without doubt.

Sganarel. Set your hand then, and I will do the same.

Aristo. So let it be, I comprehend nothing of the matter.

Sganarel. You shall be let into the matter.

Commissary. We'll be back again presently.

Sganarel. [To *Aristo.*] Well, now I'll tell you the subtlety of this intrigue. [They retire to the farther part of the stage.]

SCENE IX

Leonora, Sganarel, Aristo, Lisetta.

Leonora. O! What a deal of torment have I endured! How impertinent all these young fools appear to me!—I slipped away from the ball upon their account.

Lisetta. They were all desirous to make themselves agreeable to you.

Leonora. For my part, I never met with anything more insufferable, and should prefer the meanest conversation to all the flashy speeches of these discoursers of nothing. They believe all must give place to their powdered wigs, and fancy themselves the wittiest folks in the world when, with a wretched bantering tone, they rally one in a stupid manner about the love of an old man: whereas I value the affection of such an old man, beyond all the giddy raptures of a youthful brain. But don't I perceive—

Sganarel. [To *Aristo.*] Well, thus stands the affair. [Seeing *Leonora.*] O! I see her coming, and her maid with her.

Aristo. Without being angry, Leonora, I have reason to complain. You know, I have never desired to lay any constraint upon you, and that I have promised more than an hundred times, to allow you a full liberty of gratifying your own wishes. Your heart, notwithstanding this, disregarding my approbation, has engaged itself by promise, as well as love, without acquainting me. I am not sorry for my indulgence

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towards you, but your behaviour touches me very sensibly; it's a way of acting which my fondness of you did not deserve.

Leonora. The reason of your talking thus I do not know; but be assured, I am the same I always was. Nothing can alter my esteem for you; a regard for any other, would, to me, seem criminal, and if you'd complete my wishes, the sacred knot should make us one to-morrow.

Aristo. Upon what foundation then, brother, came you——

Sganarel. What! don't you come from Valere's lodgings? Have you not this very day declared your passion? and ha'n't you been in love with him for a year past?

Leonora. Who has given you this fine account of me, and taken the pains to invent such lies?

SCENE X

Isabella, Valere, Leonora, Aristo, Sganarel, the Commissary, the Notary, Lisetta, Ergaste.

Isabella. Sister, I beg you generously to pardon me, if I have brought any scandal upon your name by the liberties I have taken. The great perplexity a violent surprise occasioned put me upon that shameful contrivance. Your example condemns such a passion, but fate deals differently with you and me. [To *Sganarel.*] As for you, sir, I'll make no excuse, since I do you service, rather than use you ill. Heaven did not design us for one another. I found myself unworthy of your love, and chose much rather to be in another's arms than prove undeserving such a heart as yours.

Valere. [To *Sganarel.*] For my part, sir, I esteem it my glory and happiness to receive her from your hands.

Aristo. Brother, you must put up this matter quietly; your own behaviour is the occasion of it, and I perceive it's your unhappy lot, that nobody will be sorry for you though they know you're cheated.

Lisetta. By my faith I'm mighty glad of this affair, and this reward of his mistrust is an exemplary stroke.

Leonora. I can't tell if this contrivance ought to be commended, but for my part, I am sure I can't blame it.

Ergaste. His stars exposed him to the danger of being a cuckold, and to escape upon the brink of being one is a lucky thing for him.

Sganarel. No, I can't get rid of my astonishment! This

hellish trick perplexes my understanding, and I believe the devil in person could not be so wicked as this jilt. I could have engaged my life it was not in her. After this, wretched is he that puts his trust in woman; the best of 'em are constantly hatching mischief; they were made to damn the whole world; —I renounce the treacherous sex for ever, and heartily wish 'em all at the devil.

Ergaste. Well said.

Aristo. Let us all go to my house. Come, Mr. Valere, to-morrow we'll endeavour to appease his fury.

Lisetta. [To the pit.] If any of you are acquainted with brutish husbands, send them hither to our school.

THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES
(A COMEDY)

THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES, a Comedy of Five Acts in Verse, acted at Paris
at the Theatre of the Palace-Royal, December 26, 1662.

The School for Wives drew all Paris to Molière's theatre; however, the multitude of spectators could not guard him against a vast many criticisms being published upon his work, though it afforded him comfort in it. Such was the malice or cabal against it, that they insisted on the slightest faults, and cried out against the smallest neglects; but the most essential fault was not taken notice of, I mean some dangerous images in it which should never be brought on the stage. But if we consider only the art which appears in this piece, we shall be forced to acknowledge that *The School for Wives* is one of the most excellent productions of human genius. The repeated confidence which Horatio places in the jealous Arnolph, who was always made a dupe in spite of his precautions by a silly innocent young girl; the inimitable character of Agnes, the humour of the under characters which were chosen to attend her, together with the natural and quick transition from one surprise to another, are strokes the most fine and masterly. That which distinguishes *The School for Wives* still more particularly, and which neither the ancient nor modern stages had given any model of, is that the whole appears to be related, and yet at the same time is all in action. Every relation, by its proximity to the incident which gave occasion to it, traces it over again in so lively a manner, that the spectator thinks himself present at it, and by a peculiar advantage which the relation in this piece has over the action, at the same time that we learn the fact we enjoy the effect which it produces; forasmuch as the person who is concerned to be instructed learns everything which there is the greatest reason should be hid from him. The resemblance which appears in *The School for Husbands* and *The School for Wives*, with regard to Arnolph and Sganarel being both deceived by the very measures they took to prevent it, must turn to Molière's reputation who found out the secret of varying what appeared to be so much alike. The natural strokes of the witty sprightly Agnes, who offended against decorums only because Arnolph had kept her in ignorance of them, are very different from those fine subtle ones of Isabella, which sprang from no other principle but the constraint her guardian kept her under.

ACTORS

ARNOLPH, otherwise *Mr. de la Souche.*

AGNES, daughter to *Henriques.*

HORACE, lover to *Agnes*

CHRISALDUS, *Arnolph's friend*

HENRIQUES, brother-in-law to *Chrisaldus.*

ORONTES, *Horatio's father, and a friend to Arnolph.*

A NOTARY.

ALLEN, a country fellow, *Arnolph's man.*

GEORGETTA, a country wench, *Arnolph's maid.*

SCENE: *Paris, a square in the suburbs.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Chrisaldus, Arnolph.

Chrisaldus. D'ye come, say you, to marry her?

Arnolph. Yes, I'll make an end o' the affair to-morrow.

Chrisaldus. We're here alone, and may converse, I believe, without fear of being overheard. Would you have me open my heart to you as a friend? Your design makes me tremble with fear for you, and what way soever you consider the matter, to marry is in you a very great piece of rashness.

Arnolph. My friend, that's true. Perhaps you find reason at home to be apprehensive for me. Your own brows make you imagine, I suppose, that horns are everywhere the infallible appurtenances of matrimony.

Chrisaldus. Those are accidents nobody is secure against, and the care people take on that account seems to me exceeding foolish. But when I'm afraid for you, it's because o' that railery which a hundred husbands have endured the sting of. For in short, you're sensible that neither high nor low have been exempted from your reflections, that your chief delight in every place you come, is to make a mighty outcry of secret intrigues—

Arnolph. Very good. Is there another city in the world where husbands are so tame as here? Don't we see all sorts of 'em scurvily used at home? One heaps up wealth, which his spouse distributes to those who take the pains to make a cuckold of him. Another, a little more happy, but not less infamous, sees presents made to his wife every day, and yet no jealousy disturbs his mind, because she tells him 'tis out of regard to her virtue. One makes a mighty bustle, which serves but to little purpose. Another, in perfect tranquillity, lets matters take their course, and seeing the spark come to his house, very civilly takes up his gloves and cloak. One wife, with female artifice, pretends to make a confidant of her faithful husband, who sleeps securely under such delusion, and pities the poor gallant for taking pains—which he does not lose. Another,

to clear herself of extravagance, says, that she gets at play the money she lays out, and the silly husband, without dreaming at what game, thanks God for what she wins. In a word, there are everywhere these subjects of satire; and mayn't I laugh at 'em as a looker-on? Mayn't I of our fools—

Chrisaldus. Yes; but whoever laughs at another should be afraid that in return others will also laugh at him. I hear what the world says, and how people divert themselves with tattling things that happen, but whatever's divulged in places where I come, nobody ever knew me triumph at such reports. I'm reserved enough in that respect; and though I might, on these occasions, blame certain degrees of forbearance, and my design were not by any means to suffer what some husbands quietly endure, yet, I have never affected to say this; for after all 'tis to be feared the satire will come home, and one should never positively swear what one may, or may not do, in such or such a case. So that should some human disgrace befall my brows, by an over-ruling fate that directs all things, I'm almost sure that, after my behaving in this manner, people would be satisfied with laughing at it underhand; and it may be I should have the further advantage that some good folks would say, it's pity. But as for you, dear friend, the case is quite otherwise, and again I tell you that you'll run a devilish hazard; for as your tongue has been always ready to banter patient husbands, and you've been a mere devil broke loose against 'em, you must walk upright indeed not to be made a laughing-stock. And if they get the least hand upon you, beware they don't publish your shame at the very market-cross. And—

Arnolph. Lack-a-day, friend, don't trouble yourself. He must be mighty cunning that catches me as to that point. I'm acquainted with the artful tricks, the subtle contrivances which women make use of to engraff horns upon us; and since we're fooled by their dexterity, I've secured myself against that accident, for she I marry has innocence sufficient to preserve my forehead from any unlucky influence.

Chrisaldus. Hey, what do you pretend? that a fool in one word—

Arnolph. To marry a fool, is to be no fool. I believe as a good Christian, that your other half is exceeding wise; but a cunning wife is a very ill presage, and I know what the taking those with too great abilities has cost certain people. Shall I charge myself with the care of a witty wife, who talks of nothing but the ring and the drawing-room? who writes soft things both

in prose and verse, and whom the marquises and the wits visit, whilst under the name of madam's husband, I should be like a saint that nobody calls upon? No, no, I'm not for a high-flown genius; a woman that writes, understands more than she should. I intend that mine shall have in her so little of the sublime, that she shall not know even what a rhyme is; and should one play with her at the basket, and ask her in one's turn, What's put into't? I'd have her answer be, A cream tart. In a word, I'd have her extremely ignorant; it's sufficient, to tell you plainly, if she knows but how to say her prayers, to love me, to sew, and spin.

Chrisaldus. A stupid wife then is your fancy?

Arnolph. So much, that I should like an ugly fool better than a very handsome woman with a great deal of wit.

Chrisaldus. Wit and beauty—

Arnolph. Virtue is sufficient.

Chrisaldus. But how, after all, would you have a fool ever know what it is to be virtuous? Besides, I believe it tiresome enough for a man to have a fool with him all his lifetime. D'ye think, taking the matter right, that one's forehead can be well secured upon your scheme? A woman of sense may act contrary to her duty, but then she must do so knowingly, whereas a fool may fail in the common course of hers, without having a mind to't, or even thinking of it.

Arnolph. To this fine argument, this profound discourse, I shall answer as Pantagruel did to Panurge: Persuade me to marry a woman that is not a fool, preach to me, plead from June to January; you'll be astonished, when you've done, to find that you've prevailed not at all upon me.

Chrisaldus. I'll say not a word more t'ye.

Arnolph. Everyone to his own way. In a wife, as in everything else, I'll follow my own humour. I'm rich enough, I think, to take a wife with nothing, whose low station and entire dependence on me, mayn't allow her to reproach me either with her birth or fortune. A soft and staid look, when amongst other children, inspired me with a love for her from the time she was four years old. Her mother being very poor, it came into my head to beg her, and the good country-woman understanding my desire, was mighty glad to rid herself of the charge. I caused her to be brought up in a little convent, remote from all company, according to my own policy, that's to say, enjoining them to employ all their pains to make her as much an idiot as possible. The success, thank Heaven, answered my expecta-

tion; and when she grew up, I found her silly to such a degree, that I blessed Heaven for having done my business in giving me a wife exactly to my wish. I brought her home, and as my house is continually open to an hundred sorts of people, (precaution being always needful), I have placed her out o' the way, in this other house, where nobody comes to visit me; and that her good disposition mayn't be spoiled, I keep none about her but people every whit as foolish as herself. You'll ask me, Wherefore this long story? Why it's to let you see the care I have taken.—The result of all is, that this evening, as a faithful friend, I invite you to supper with her. I'd have you examine her a little, and see whether I'm to be condemned for my choice.

Chrisaldus. I agree to't.

Arnolph. You may judge by this conversation with her, both of her person and her innocence.

Chrisaldus. As to that article, what you have told me can't—

Arnolph. My description comes even short of the truth. I admire her simplicity on all occasions, and sometimes she says things that I'm ready to drop down with laughing at. T'other day (could one imagine it?) she was uneasy, and came to ask me, with an ignorance nothing can be equal to, whether children when they're born come into the world by the ear.

Chrisaldus. I am very glad, Mr. Arnolph—

Arnolph. How! Will you always call me by that name?

Chrisaldus. Why, do all I can it comes into my mouth, and I never remember Mr. de la Souche. What the deuce has put it in your head to unchristen yourself at two and forty years of age, and take a title upon you from an old rotten stump belonging to your farm?

Arnolph. Besides that the house is known by that name, La Souche is more agreeable to my ears than Arnolph.

Chrisaldus. What a shame is it to quit the real name of one's ancestors to take up another founded upon chimeras! Yet this is the whim of most people, and without including you in the comparison, I know a country-fellow called Fat Peter, whose whole estate being only one single quarter of an acre, he made a muddy ditch all round it, and assumed the pompous name of Mr. de L'Isle.

Arnolph. You might let instances of this kind alone. In short, La Souche is the name I bear; I've a reason for it, I find a pleasure in it, and to call me by any other is disobligeing me.

Chrisaldus. Most folks however hardly can submit to it, and I see even still the directions of your letters—

Arnolph. I bear it easily from those who are not informed; but you—

Chrisaldus. Be it so. We'll have no quarrel about that. I'll take care to use my mouth to call you nothing else but Mr. de la Souche.

Arnolph. Good-bye. I knock here only to bid good-morrow, and tell that I'm come back.

Chrisaldus. [Aside, going away.] Troth, I look upon him as an accomplished fool.

Arnolph. [Alone.] He's a little touched as to some certain things. It's wonderful to see with how much passion every man is wedded to his own opinion! [Knocking at his door.] Soho.

SCENE II

Arnolph, Allen, and Georgetta in the house.

Allen. Who knocks?

Arnolph. Open the door. [Aside.] They'll be very glad, I suppose, to see me after ten days' absence.

Allen. Who's there?

Arnolph. I.

Allen. Georgetta.

Georgetta. Well?

Allen. Open the door below there.

Georgetta. Go do it yourself.

Allen. You go do't.

Georgetta. I won't go, faith.

Allen. And I won't go.

Arnolph. A pretty kind of ceremony, whilst I am left without!—Soho, soho there; pray—

Georgetta. Who knocks at door?

Arnolph. Your master.

Georgetta. Allen.

Allen. What d'ye say?

Georgetta. It's my master. Open the door quickly.

Allen. Do you open it.

Georgetta. I'm blowing the fire.

Allen. I can't stir for fear of the cat, lest my sparrow should get out.

Arnolph. Which ever of you two won't open the door, shan't have a bit of victuals for above these four days.

Georgetta. What occasion have you to come, when I am running?

Allen. Why you more than I? A fine contrivance truly!

Georgetta. Stand out o' the way.

Allen. I won't, stand you out o' the way.

Georgetta. I'll open the door.

Allen. And I'll open it.

Georgetta. You shan't open it.

Allen. No more shall you.

Georgetta. Nor you.

Arnolph. I had need have abundance of patience here.

Allen. [Entering.] However, 'tis my business, sir.

Georgetta. [Entering.] I'm your servant for that; 'tis mine.

Allen. Was not it out of respect to my master here, I'd—

Arnolph. [Receiving a blow from Allen.] Plague!

Allen. I ask pardon.

Arnolph. See that loggerhead there.

Allen. She's so too, sir—

Arnolph. Hold your tongues both of you. Have done with your fooling, and mind what I ask ye. Well, Allen, how do all here do?

Allen. Why, sir, we—we— [Arnolph pulls off Allen's hat three times.] Sir, we—we are—thank Heaven—we—we—

Arnolph. Impertinent fool, who taught you to talk to me with your hat upon your head?

Allen. You do well, sir, I was in the wrong.

Arnolph. [To Allen.] Bid Agnes come down.

SCENE III

Arnolph, Georgetta.

Arnolph. Was she melancholy after I went away?

Georgetta. Melancholy? No.

Arnolph. No!

Georgetta. Yes, yes.

Arnolph. Why then—

Georgetta. Yes, let me die. She continually expected your coming back, and we saw neither horse, ass, nor mule pass by the house, which she did not take for you.

SCENE IV

Arnolph, Agnes, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. Her work in her hand is a good sign.—Well, Agnes, I'm come back from my journey. Are you glad of it?

Agnes. Yes, sir, thank Heaven.

Arnolph. And I too am glad to see you again. You've been well all the time, as one may see.

Agnes. Except for the fleas that disturbed me in the night.

Arnolph. O, in a little time you shall have somebody to catch 'em for you.

Agnes. You'll do me a kindness.

Arnolph. So I can easily imagine. What are you about there?

Agnes. I'm making myself some headclothes. Your night shirts and caps are done.

Arnolph. Hoh, that's well, go upstairs, don't tire yourself, I shall be back again presently, and will talk to you about affairs of consequence.

SCENE V

Arnolph. [Alone.] You heroines of the age, you learned ladies, that utter tender and fine sentiments, I defy at once all your verses, your romances, your letters, your love-letters, and all your knowledge, to come up to the value of this modest and virtuous ignorance. It's not by riches one should be tempted; and provided that honour be—

SCENE VI

Horace, Arnolph.

Arnolph. Whom do I see? Is it he?—Ay. I'm mistaken. No, no. But it is. Nay, it's he himself. Hor—

Horace. Mr. Ar—

Arnolph. Horace.

Horace. Arnolph.

Arnolph. O, joy extreme! How long have you been here?

Horace. Nine days.

Arnolph. Really—

Horace. I went directly to your house, but to no purpose.

Arnolph. I was in the country.

Horace. Ay, you'd been gone two days.

Arnolph. How children shoot up in a few years! I'm surprised to find him grown so, after having known him no bigger than this.

Horace. You see how it is.

Arnolph. But, pray, how does Orontes your father, my good and dear friend, whom I respect and revere? Is he hearty still? He knows I bear a part in everything which concerns him; we have not seen one another for these four years, nor written to one another, which is still more, methinks.

Horace. He's even heartier than we are, Mr. Arnolph.—I've got a letter for you from him. But by another since he sends me word of his own coming, though I don't yet know the reason of it.—Do you know who of your townsmen it should be, that's upon his return hither with abundance of wealth, which he has been fourteen years acquiring in the West Indies?

Arnolph. No. Were you told his name?

Horace. Henriques.

Arnolph. No.

Horace. My father speaks to me of him and his return, as if I was perfectly acquainted with him; and writes me word they are setting out together upon an affair of consequence, which his letter does not mention.

[*Giving Orontes's letter to Arnolph.*

Arnolph. I shall certainly be extremely glad to see him, and will do all in my power to entertain him. [*After having read the letter.*] Letters amongst friends should be less ceremonious; all these compliments are needless things; you might freely have used my fortune, without his taking the pains to write to me on that score.

Horace. I'm one who take people at their word: and I've just now occasion for an hundred pistoles.

Arnolph. Troth, to make use of me in this manner, is to oblige me, and I'm glad I've got 'em ready for you.—Take purse and all.

Horace. It must—

Arnolph. Let us drop this discourse. Well, what d'ye think of this city?

Horace. Its inhabitants are numerous, its buildings sumptuous, and I believe its diversions admirable.

Arnolph. Every man has his pleasures suitable to his taste; but as for those who are called gallants, they have all they can wish in this country; for the women are made for coquetry,

you'll find 'em of a gentle temper, both the fair and the brown, and the husbands are withal the civillest creatures in the world. It's an entertainment for a prince, it's a mere comedy to me to see the pranks I do.—Maybe you've already smitten somebody.—Have you had no luck yet? People formed like you are more worth than gold;—you're of a shape to be a cuckold-maker.

Horace. To conceal nothing from you of the naked truth, I've had here a certain love-adventure, and I'm obliged in friendship to acquaint you with it.

Arnolph. [Aside.] Good. Here's some new waggish story to minute down in my pocket-book.

Horace. But I beg, however, this matter may be a secret.

Arnolph. Oh!

Horace. You're not ignorant that on these occasions, if a secret gets air it breaks all our measures. I'll freely confess t'ye then, that a certain fair one in this place has captivated my heart. My small endeavours have immediately had so much success, that I've obtained a free admittance to her; and without boasting of myself too much, or doing her an injury, my affairs with her are in a mighty good posture.

Arnolph. [Laughing.] Ha, ha, who is't?

Horace. [Pointing to Agnes's lodging.] A young creature that lodges in the house with red walls you see yonder.—Simple indeed she is, through the matchless folly of a man who hides her from all company; but amidst that ignorance to which he would enslave her, she discovers charms that would throw one into raptures; an air most engaging, and I know not what of tenderness, which no heart is proof against. But, perhaps you've often seen this young star of love, adorned with so many perfections. They call her Agnes.

Arnolph. [Aside.] Oh! I burst.

Horace. As for the man, 'tis, I think La Zousse, or Source, that they call him; I don't much concern myself about his name. He's rich, by what they told me, but not over-wise. They talked to me of him as a ridiculous fellow. D'ye know him?

Arnolph. [Aside.] A bitter pill!

Horace. What! don't you answer?

Arnolph. O, ay—I know him.

Horace. He is a fool, is not he?

Arnolph. Heh—

Horace. How now? what d'ye say to't? Heh! that means yes. Ridiculously jealous? Fool? I find he's just as I was

told. In short, the lovely Agnes has conquered me; to tell you the truth, she's a charming creature, and 'twould be a sin to let a beauty so extraordinary remain in the power of this whimsical fellow. For my part, all my endeavours, all my most passionate wishes, are to make her mine, in spite of this jealous wretch; and the money I was so free to borrow of you, is for no other purpose but to bring about this laudable enterprise. You know better than I, that whate'er we undertake, gold is the master-key; and that sweet metal which distracts so many heads, procures the victory in love as well as war. But methinks you don't seem pleased: is it that you disapprove my project?

Arnolph. No, I was considering—

Horace. This conversation tires you. Farewell. I'll come by and by to your house, to thank you.

Arnolph. [Thinking himself alone.] What! must it—

Horace. [Coming back.] Once more, I beseech you to be wary, and not go to divulge my secret.

Arnolph. [Thinking himself alone.] What my soul now feels—

Horace. [Coming back.] Especially to my father, who would make it perhaps a subject of anger.

Arnolph. [Thinking he'll come back again.] Oh!—[Alone.] Oh! what have I suffered during this discourse! never vexation was equal sure to mine! With what imprudence and what extreme haste he came to give an account of this business to me myself! Though my other name keeps him in an error, yet did ever any hare-brains run on so furiously? But having suffered so much, I should have checked myself, till I had discovered what I have reason to apprehend; I should have encouraged his foolish babbling to inform myself perfectly thereby, of what is carrying on privately between 'em. Let's try to join him again, he's not got far, I believe; let's worm out of him the whole secret of this matter. I tremble for fear of the misfortune that may befall me by so doing; one often seeks after what one would not find.

ACT II

SCENE I

Arnolph. 'Tis luck for me, I really think, that I lost my walk, and missed of the way he went; for in short the overbearing confusion of my mind could not have entirely concealed itself from him; 'twould have discovered the grief that preys upon me, and I would not have him know what he is ignorant of at present. But I'm not a man that can put up this matter, and leave the spark at liberty to pursue his design. I am resolved to break the course on't, and learn immediately how far affairs have been carried on between them. I take it, that my honour is deeply concerned therein; as the case stands, I consider her as a wife already. She can't transgress but 'twill redound to my shame, and whate'er she does will be placed to my account. O fatal absence! unhappy journey!

[*Knocking at the door.*]

SCENE II

Arnolph, Allen, Georgetta.

Allen. Ah! sir, this time——

Arnolph. Be quiet. Come hither both of ye. That way, that way. Come along, come along, I say.

Georgetta. Ah! you frighten me! all my blood runs cold!

Arnolph. Is this the way you've obeyed me in my absence? and have you both betrayed me by agreement?

Georgetta. [*Falling at Arnolph's feet.*] Oh! don't eat me, sir, I beseech you.

Allen. [*Aside.*] I'm certain some mad dog has bit him.

Arnolph. [*Aside.*] Ugh! I can't speak I came so fast, I'm stifled; would I could throw off all my clothes. [*To Allen and Georgetta.*] Ye cursed scoundrels, you've permitted a man to come then, have ye?——What, would you run away?——You must this instant——if you stir——I'll have you tell me. Ugh! Ay, I'll have you both.——S'death! whoever stirs I'll murder him.——How came that man into my house? Heh!——speak, [*Panting.*] make haste, quick, dispatch, in a moment, without considering. Will ye tell me?

Allen and Georgetta. Oh! oh!

Georgetta. [Falling at Arnolph's feet.] I swoon.

Allen. [Falling at Arnolph's feet.] I die.

Arnolph. [Aside.] I'm all over in a sweat. Let me take a little breath. I must walk and cool myself. Could I have imagined when I saw him a little one, that he would grow up for this! Heavens! what my heart endures! 'Twould be better I think to draw from her own mouth by kind usage an account of what concerns me. Let me try to moderate my passion. Patience, my heart, gently, gently. [To Allen and Georgetta.] Rise, get ye in, and bid Agnes come down. Stay. [Aside.] They'll go tell her the uneasiness I'm under, and she'll be the less surprised. I'll fetch her out myself. [To Allen and Georgetta.] Wait here for me.

SCENE III

Allen, Georgetta.

Georgetta. Good-lack! how terrible he is! his looks frighten me horribly; and I never saw a more hideous Christian.

Allen. That gentleman has angered him, I told you so.

Georgetta. But what the deuce is the matter that he makes us keep in our mistress with so much strictness? Why would he hide her thus from all the world, and cannot bear to see anybody come near her?

Allen. 'Tis because this affair makes him jealous.

Georgetta. But how comes this fancy into his head?

Allen. It comes—it comes, because he's jealous.

Georgetta. Ay; but wherefore is he so? and why this passion?

Allen. It's because jealousy . . . d'ye understand me right, *Georgetta*, is a thing—which—makes people uneasy—and drives 'em all round the house. I'll give you a comparison, that you may conceive it better. Now tell me the truth, when you've got a mess of porridge, if some greedy gut should come to eat it from you, wouldn't you fall in a passion and be ready to beat him?

Georgetta. Ay, I understand that.

Allen. It's just in the same manner. Woman really is a man's porridge; and when a man sees other folks endeavouring to dip their fingers in his porridge, he flies immediately into a violent fury.

Georgetta. Ay; but why doesn't everybody do so alike? Why see we some that appear pleased when their wives are with fine gentlemen?

Allen. Because everybody hasn't this gluttonous love, that would keep all to itself.

Georgetta. If my eyes are not dazzled, I see him coming.

Allen. Your eyes are good; 'tis he.

Georgetta. Look how melancholy he is.

Allen. That's because he's vexed.

SCENE IV

Arnolph, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. [Aside.] A certain Greek told Augustus the Emperor, as a maxim equally useful and reasonable, that when any accident puts us in a passion, we should first of all repeat the alphabet; that in the meanwhile our anger may abate, and we may do nothing which we ought not to do. This advice I've followed in the affair of Agnes; and I have brought her on purpose hither, under pretence of taking a walk, to the intent that the suspicions of my disordered mind may artfully bring this discourse about so as to dive into her heart, and clear up the matter gently.

SCENE V

Arnolph, Agnes, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. Come Agnes. [To *Allen* and *Georgetta*.] Get ye in.

SCENE VI

Arnolph, Agnes.

Arnolph. 'Tis fine walking.

Agnes. Very fine.

Arnolph. A charming day!

Agnes. Mighty charming.

Arnolph. What news have ye?

Agnes. The little cat is dead.

Arnolph. It's a pity. But what? we're all mortal, and every one for himself. Didn't it rain whilst I was in the country?

Agnes. No.

Arnolph. Were you not tired?

Agnes. I never am tired.

Arnolph. But what have you done these nine or ten days?

Agnes. Six shirts, I think, and likewise six caps.

Arnolph. [Having mused awhile.] This world is a strange world, my dear Agnes. Observe the scandal, and how every one prattles. Some o' the neighbours have been telling me

that a young man, a stranger, came to my house in my absence, and that you permitted him to see and talk with you. But I gave no credit to these slandering tongues, and would have laid a wager it was false—

Agnes. Lack-a-day, don't lay, you'll certainly lose.

Arnolph. What! is it true that a man—

Agnes. 'Twas really so. He scarce stirred out of our house, I'll swear.

Arnolph. [Aside.] This sincere declaration shows me her ingenuity however. [Aloud.] But, methinks, Agnes, if I remember right, I forbade your seeing anybody.

Agnes. Yes. But though I saw him, you don't know the reason of it. You'd certainly have done so as well as I.

Arnolph. That may be; but, in short, tell me how this matter was.

Agnes. It's very surprising, and almost incredible. I was out in the balcony working in the fresh air, when I saw a well-made young man pass along under the trees just by, who perceiving me look at him, immediately bowed to me very respectfully. I, not to fail in civility, returned him a curtsy. He presently bowed to me again, I took care to make him another curtsy; and he bowing to me a third time, I also instantly answered with a third curtsy. He walked to and fro, making me every time the handsomest bow that could be, and I, who looked at him earnestly all the while, made him as many curtsies. So that if night had not come on, I should still have continued in that manner, being unwilling to give over, or to lie under the dissatisfaction of having him believe me less complaisant than he.

Arnolph. Mighty well.

Agnes. The day after, being at our door, an old woman came up and accosted me after this manner. My child, may good Heaven bless thee, and long preserve thee in all thy beauty! It has not made thee such a lovely creature for thee to misemploy its gifts; and thou shouldst know, that thou hast wounded a heart which now is forced to complain of it.

Arnolph. [Aside.] Ah! agent of the devil! damned cursed jade!

Agnes. If I have I wounded anybody? answered I, quite astonished. Wounded! ay, thou hast wounded him indeed, cries she; and it's the gentleman thou sawest from the balcony yesterday. Alas! says I, how could I possibly do it? Did I throw anything down upon him carelessly? No, replies she, thine eyes have given the fatal stroke, and it's from their

glances all his hurt proceeds. Good luck! says I, I'm surprised the most that ever was; can my eyes do people any harm? Ay, daughter, cries she, thine eyes have a deadly poison in 'em which thou dost not know of. In a word, the poor wretch is languishing away, and if so be, continues the charitable old woman, thy cruelty refuses him assistance, he'll be a dead man in two days' time. Bless me! I should be very sorry for't, says I; but what assistance does he require of me? My child, cries she, he only requests the happiness of seeing thee, and talking to thee. Thine eyes alone are able to prevent his ruin, and remedy the mischief they have produced. Lack-a-day! with all my heart, says I, and since it is so, he may come to see me as often as he has a mind to it.

Arnolph. [Aside.] O cursed sorceress! Poisoner of souls! may Hell reward thy charitable wiles!

Agnes. So he saw me and received a cure. Don't you yourself think now, that I had reason for what I did? and after all, could I have the conscience to let him die for want of help? I who am so full of pity for those that suffer, that I can't see a chicken die without weeping.

Arnolph. [Aside softly.] All this is only the effect of an innocent mind; and I must blame my own indiscreet absence for it, which left this perfect goodness exposed to the designs of artful seducers, without any adviser. I fear the rascal, by his impudent pretences, has carried the matter somewhat beyond a jest.

Agnes. What ails you? methinks you're a little out of humour. Is it that I did amiss in what I told you?

Arnolph. No. But tell me what followed upon this interview, and how the young man behaved in his visits.

Agnes. Lack-a-day! did you but know how he was transported, how he lost his illness as soon as I saw him, the present he has made me of a fine casket, and the money our Allen and Georgetta have had of him, you'd certainly be in love with him, and say as we do.

Arnolph. Well, but what did he do when he was alone with you?

Agnes. He said he loved me with an unequalled passion, and told me in the finest language in the world, things that nothing ever can come up to; the agreeableness whereof delighted me every time I heard him speak, and raised within me a certain, I know not what, emotion which entirely charmed me.

Arnolph. [Aside.] O tormenting inquiry into a fatal secret,

where the inquirer only suffers all the pain! [Aloud.] Besides all this talk, all these pretty ways, didn't he bestow some kisses on you too?

Agnes. Oh, to that degree! he took my hands and arms, and was never weary of kissing 'em.

Arnolph. Did he take nothing else from you, *Agnes*? [Seeing her at a loss.] Hah?

Agnes. Why, he did—

Arnolph. What?

Agnes. Take—

Arnolph. How?

Agnes. The—

Arnolph. What d'ye mean?

Agnes. I durst not tell you; for, maybe, you'll be angry wi' me.

Arnolph. No.

Agnes. Yes, but you will.

Arnolph. Lack-a-day, I won't.

Agnes. Swear faith then.

Arnolph. Well, faith.

Agnes. He took!—You'll be in a passion.

Arnolph. No.

Agnes. Yes.

Arnolph. No, no, no, no. What the deuce is this mystery? What did he take from you?

Agnes. He—

Arnolph. [Aside.] I suffer damnation.

Agnes. He took away the ribbon you gave me; to tell you the truth, I could not help it.

Arnolph. [Recovering himself.] No matter for the ribbon. But I want to know whether he did nothing but kiss your hands.

Agnes. Why! do people do other things?

Arnolph. No, no. But didn't he desire of you some other remedy to cure the disorder he said had seized him.

Agnes. No, you may imagine, had he desired it, I should have granted anything to do him good.

Arnolph. [Aside.] Heaven's goodness be praised, I'm come cheaply off. If I fall into the like mistake again, I'll consent to be ill used. [Aloud.] Peace, 'tis an effect of your innocence, Agnes. I'll say no more of it. What's done is done. I'm sensible that by flattering you the spark only wants to impose upon you, and afterwards to laugh at you.

Agnes. Oh, no; he told me so above twenty times.

Arnolph. Oh! you don't know how little he is to be believed. But in short I must tell you, that to accept caskets and hearken to the idle stories of these powdered fops, to permit 'em, in a languishing way, to kiss your hands and charm your heart in this manner, is a mortal sin, the greatest that can be committed.

Agnes. A sin, d'ye say! The reason, pray?

Arnolph. The reason? Why the reason is, because it's declared that Heaven is offended at such doings.

Agnes. Offended! But wherefore should it be offended? Lack-a-day! 'tis so sweet, so pleasant! I admire at the delight one finds in't, and didn't know these things before.

Arnolph. Ay, there's a great deal of pleasure in all these tendernesses, these complaisant discourses, these fond embraces; but they should be tasted in an honest manner, and the sin should be taken away by marrying.

Agnes. Is it no more a sin when a body's married?

Arnolph. No.

Agnes. Then marry me out of hand, I pray.

Arnolph. If you desire it, I desire it too, and came back on purpose to marry you.

Agnes. Is that possible?

Arnolph. Yes.

Agnes. How glad you'll make me!

Arnolph. Ay, I don't question but matrimony will please you.

Agnes. Will you have us two—

Arnolph. Nothing more certain.

Agnes. If it be so, I shall embrace you.

Arnolph. And I shall do the same by you.

Agnes. For my part, I don't understand when people are in jest. Do you speak seriously?

Arnolph. Ay, you shall see I do.

Agnes. We shall be married then?

Arnolph. Yes.

Agnes. But when?

Arnolph. This very evening.

Agnes. [Laughing.] This very evening?

Arnolph. This very evening. Does it make you laugh then?

Agnes. Yes.

Arnolph. It's my desire to see you happy.

Agnes. Lack-a-day! how greatly I am obliged to you! and what satisfaction shall I enjoy with him!

Arnolph. With whom?

Agnes. With——him there.

Arnolph. Him there—I don't talk of him there. You're a little forward, methinks, to choose a husband. In a word, it's another body I've got ready for you; and as for that gentleman there, I intend, by your favour (even though the malady he amuses you with, should be the death of him), that henceforward you shall break off all acquaintance with him. That when he comes to the house, your compliment shall be civilly to shut the door upon him, and if he knocks, throw a stone at him out o' the window, and oblige him in good earnest to appear there no more. D'ye understand me, Agnes? I'll lie concealed in a corner, and be witness of your behaviour.

Agnes. Alack! he's so handsome, 'tis—

Arnolph. Heh! what a speech!

Agnes. I shan't ha' the heart—

Arnolph. No more disputing. Go upstairs.

Agnes. But what? Will you—

Arnolph. 'Tis enough I'm master; I command, go you and obey.

ACT III

SCENE I

Arnolph, Agnes, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. Indeed everything has succeeded well, and I'm delighted extremely. You've followed my directions to a wonder, and utterly confounded the handsome seducer. This it is to have a discreet adviser: your innocence, Agnes, had been ensnared; and see what a condition you'd have been in, before you were aware on't. You were running directly on in the high road to hell and destruction, had not I set you right. One knows the ways of all these blades but too well; they've fine stockings, ribbons, and feathers in abundance, vast wigs, good teeth, and a smooth tongue; but I assure you, there's a cloven foot underneath, and they are devils in reality, whose voracious appetite endeavours to make a prey of female honour. However, this time, thanks to the care that's been taken, you've escaped with your virtue. The air wherewith I saw you fling that stone at him, which has rendered all his designs hopeless, makes me still more resolved not to delay the nuptials, for which I told you to prepare yourself. But it's proper, first of all, to have a

little talk with you, that may be to our advantage. [To *Georgetta and Allen.*] Bring out a chair hither. If you ever—

Georgetta. We'll remember all your instructions perfectly. T'other gentleman there imposed upon us. But—

Allen. If ever he gets in any more, may I never drink again. Besides he's a blockhead, he gave us two crown pieces t'other day that were not weight.

Arnolph. Get what I ordered for supper, and as for our contract which I spoke of, let one of you fetch the notary hither, that lives at the corner of the market place.

SCENE II

Arnolph, Agnes.

Arnolph. [Sitting.] Put away your work, Agnes, that you may hearken to me. Hold your head up a little, and turn your face. There; look at me so whilst I'm speaking, and be sure remember every tittle of what I say. Agnes, I intend to marry you, and you ought a hundred times a day to bless your fate, to consider the humble condition you were in, and at the same time admire my goodness, which from the low station of a poor country girl raises you to the honourable rank of a citizen's wife; to enjoy both the bed and the embraces of a man who has shunned all such engagements, and whose heart has refused the honour 'twill do you, to twenty people very capable of pleasing. You ought, I say, continually to have in mind, how insignificant you would be without this glorious alliance, to the intent that consideration may the better teach you to deserve the station I shall place you in, and make you always know yourself, so that I may ne'er repent of what I do. Matrimony, Agnes, is not a trifling thing; severe duties are required of a wife; and I don't design to exalt you to that condition, for you to be a libertine and take your pleasure. Your sex is merely dependent in that state, all the power is on the husband's side; though they're two parts of the same body, yet those two parts are by no means equal; one is the superior part, and t'other is subordinate: the one is in all cases subject to the other that governs; and that obedience which the well-disciplined soldier shows to his general, the servant to his master, a child to his father, or the lowest monk to his superior, comes even very short of the tractableness, the submission, the humility, and the profound respect which a wife should have for her husband, her chief, her lord and master. When he looks

seriously upon her she should turn her eyes immediately upon the ground, and ne'er presume to look him in the face, till he favours her with a gracious glance. This is what our wives nowadays little understand, but be not you corrupted by the example of other people. Beware of imitating those vile coquettes, whose pranks are talked of all the city over: and don't let the devil tempt you, that is to say, hearken to no young coxcomb. Consider, Agnes, that by making you part of myself, I give you up my honour, which honour is tender, and offended at a little matter; that there's no trifling on such an occasion as this, and that in hell there are boiling cauldrons wherein wives that live wickedly are plunged for ever and ever. I'm not telling you a pack of stories, and these lessons should be imprinted in your heart. If you practise 'em sincerely, and avoid being a coquette, your soul will be always as white and spotless as a lily, but if you forfeit your honour, 'twill become as black as a coal; you'll seem a hideous creature to everybody, and in time you'll be the devil's property, and boil in hell to all eternity, from which may Heaven's goodness preserve you. Make a curtsy. As a probationer in a convent must know her duty by heart, so she that marries should do the very same: and I've a writing of great importance in my pocket, which will teach you the duty of a wife. I don't know the author of it, but it's some good body, and I'd have this be your only study.

[He gets up.] Hold. Let's see if you can read it easily.

[Agnes reads.]

MAXIMS OF WEDLOCK, or the Duties of a Married Woman; together with her daily Exercise:

I. MAXIM. She that enters into the state of matrimony, ought to remember, notwithstanding the train of admirers other women have nowadays, that the man who takes her, takes her only for himself.

Arnolph. I shall explain to you what that means; but for the present let us only read. [Agnes goes on.]

II. MAXIM. She ought not to dress herself, but according to her husband's liking. The care of her beauty is what concerns him only, and she should not regard though other people think her homely.

III. MAXIM. Far be from her the study of ogling, beauty-washes, paints, pomatum, and a thousand ingredients that set off the complexion. These are always mortal poisons to honour,

and the pains bestowed to appear handsome, are seldom for the husband's sake.

IV. MAXIM. When she goes abroad, she ought, as honour requires, to prevent the wounds her eyes might give, by concealing them under her hood: for in order to please her husband perfectly, she should please nobody else.

V. MAXIM. Except such folks as pay visits to her husband, decency forbids her receiving any friend whatever; those people of gallantry that have no business but with the wife, are not at all agreeable to the husband.

VI. MAXIM. She must refuse all presents from men, for in the age we live, nothing is given for nothing.

VII. MAXIM. Amongst her movables, should she be displeased at it, there must neither be scrutoir, ink, paper, nor pens. The husband, according to good custom, should write all that is written in his family.

VIII. MAXIM. Those disorderly societies called assemblies, which always corrupt the minds of women, ought in good policy to be forbidden them; for there it is they contrive their plots against poor husbands.

IX. MAXIM. Every woman that would preserve her honour, ought to refrain from gaming as a terrible thing; for play is very bewitching, and often drives a woman to her last stake.

X. MAXIM. Public walks she must not come into, nor accept of treats in the country; for the wise are of opinion, 'tis the husband always pays for such entertainments.

XI. MAXIM.—

Arnolph. You shall make an end on't by yourself, and by and by I'll explain these matters to you, as they should be line by line. I have a little affair come into my head, 'tis only to speak a word, and I shan't stay at all. Go in, and take a special care of that book. If the notary comes, let him wait for me a little.

SCENE III

Arnolph. [Alone.] I can't do better than to make her my wife. I shall be able to manage her just as I've a mind. She's in my hands exactly like a piece of wax, and I may give her what form I please. I very narrowly escaped being choused in my absence through her over innocence; but to say the truth, one's wife's failings had much better be from that cause; for such sort

of mistakes are easily amended. All simple people are attentive to advice, and if they're led out o' the right way, a word or two will bring them into it again immediately. But a witty wife is quite another kind of creature; our fate depends on her judgment only; nothing can divert her from pursuing what she is once set upon, and all our precepts, in this case, prove abortive. Her wit enables her to ridicule our maxims, to make virtues of her faults, and find out ways of deceiving the most dexterous, in order to bring about her wicked purposes. We labour in vain to turn aside the blow; a woman of wit is a devil at intrigue, and after her caprice has silently passed sentence on our honour, it must be submitted to. A great many honest people are able to declare as much. But my blunderbuss shall find no cause to laugh; he has met with what he deserves for tattling. This is the common fault of our Frenchmen, in the possession of good fortune they are never easy, while it's a secret, and so dear to 'em is this senseless vanity, that they would rather lose their happiness than not talk of it. Sure the devil must be very strong in women when they choose such rattle pates! and ——But here he comes: let me be upon my guard, and find out how much he's mortified.

SCENE IV

Horace, Arnolph.

Horace. I'm just come from your house, where fate seems resolved I should never meet with you; but I'll go so often, that some moment at last shall——

Arnolph. Poh! don't let us enter upon these useless compliments; nothing is so tiresome to me as ceremony, and could I prevail, it should be entirely banished. It's a wretched custom, wherein most people waste two parts in three of their time. Let's leave it off then without any more ado. [Puts on his hat.] Well, as to your love affair, Mr. Horace, may I be informed how you go on in it? I was taken off before by some business that came in my head, but I've been considering of it since. I admire the quick progress you've made at the beginning, and am solicitous for the event.

Horace. Troth since I laid open my heart to you, my passion has been unfortunate.

Arnolph. Ay! how so?

Horace. Cruel fortune has brought my fair one's master back again out o' the country.

Arnolph. What a misfortune!

Horace. And besides, to my very great sorrow, he knows what has passed in private between us two.

Arnolph. How the deuce could he learn this affair so soon?

Horace. That I can't tell. But it is certainly so. I intended at my usual hour to pay a short visit to this charming girl, when the man and maid both, with a voice and countenance altered from what they used to be, opposed my entrance, and shut the door to my face with a Get you gone, you're troublesome.

Arnolph. The door to your face!

Horace. To my face.

Arnolph. That's a little hard.

Horace. I would have talked to 'em through the door, but to all that I could say their answer was, You shan't come in, my master has forbid it.

Arnolph. Didn't they open the door then?

Horace. No. And Agnes confirmed her master's return to me from the window, by bidding me be gone in a very angry tone, and flinging a stone at me.

Arnolph. How! a stone?

Horace. A stone that was none of the least neither, by which with her own hands she received my visit.

Arnolph. The devil! These are no jokes. Your affair, I think, is in a sad condition.

Horace. Very true, I'm in a bad way by this unlucky return of his.

Arnolph. Really I'm sorry for you, I protest I am.

Horace. This man breaks all my measures.

Arnolph. Ay, but that's nothing; you'll find a way of setting yourself to rights again.

Horace. I must endeavour by some intelligence to baffle the strict vigilance of this jealous fellow.

Arnolph. You'll easily do that, for when all's done the girl loves you.

Horace. Without doubt she does.

Arnolph. You'll bring matters to bear.

Horace. I hope so.

Arnolph. That stone has perplexed you, but you should not wonder at it.

Horace. That's certain, for I presently found out that my rival was there, and managed the whole affair without being seen in it. But what surprised me, and what you will wonder

at, was another accident I'm going to tell you of, a bold stroke of the lovely girl, which one wouldn't have expected from her simplicity. It must be confessed, love is a skilful master; he teaches us to be what we never were before, and oftentimes an entire alteration in our manners becomes by his lessons only a moment's work. He breaks through the obstacles of nature in us, and his sudden effects have the appearance of miracles. In an instant he makes a miser liberal, a coward courageous, a churl obliging; he renders the dullest capacity fit for everything, and gives wit to the most ignorant. This last miracle is indeed remarkable in Agnes, for snapping me up in these very words: Get you gone, I'm resolved ne'er to receive your visits; I know all you have to say, and there's my answer. This stone, or this pebble, at which you'd wonder, fell down with a letter at my feet; and what I admire is to find this letter adapted exactly to the meaning of her words, and the stone she threw. Are not you amazed at such an action as this? Doesn't love know the art of quickening the understanding? And can it be denied that his powerful flames have astonishing effects upon the mind? What d'ye say to all this? What think you of the letter? Heh! don't you admire this cunning contrivance? Isn't it comical to observe what a part my jealous rival has been acting with all this foolery? Tell me—

Arnolph. Ay, very comical.

Horace. Laugh at it a little then. [*Arnolph forces a laugh.*] This military man, who fortifies himself in his own house against my passion, and seems provided with stones, as though I meant to enter by storm, who in a whimsical friglit encourages all his servants to drive me away, is imposed upon before his face, even by his own instrument, by her whom he would keep in the utmost ignorance. I own, for my part, though his return has thrown my affair under a very great difficulty, I think 'tis so exceeding comical that I can't forbear laughing whene'er it comes into my head, and methinks you don't laugh at it enough.

Arnolph. [*With a forced laugh.*] I beg your pardon, I laugh at it as much as I'm able.

Horace. But I must show you her letter as a friend. All that her heart felt her hand has there written down; but in terms so affecting, so perfectly full of goodness, of innocent tenderness and sincerity! in short, in the very manner that pure nature expresses the first wound love gives.

Arnolph. [*Aside.*] This is the consequence of your writing, you slut; 'twas contrary to my intention that you were taught it.

Horace. [Reads.] "I've a mind to write to you, but I'm at a loss where I shall begin. I have some thoughts which I'm desirous you should be acquainted with; but I don't know how to tell 'em you, and distrust my want of words. As I begin to understand that I've always been kept in ignorance, I'm afraid of writing something that would be wrong, or saying more than I should do. In troth, I can't tell what you've done to me; but I find that I'm ready to die with vexation for what I'm forced to do against you, that 'twould give me all the uneasiness in the world to lose you, and that I should be mighty glad to be yours. There's harm, perhaps, in saying so, but really I can't forbear, though I wish it could have been brought about, and no harm had been in it. I'm told, for certain, that all young men are false, that what they say must not be minded, and that everything you tell me is only to deceive me. But I assure you, I can't yet imagine that of you, and I'm so affected by your words, that I don't know how to believe they're lies. Tell me generously if they be; for as I'm without any ill design, you'd do the greatest injury in the world should you deceive me, and I believe I should die with the vexation of it."

Arnolph. [Aside.] Um, bitch!

Horace. What d'ye say?

Arnolph. I? nothing. I only coughed.

Horace. Did you ever see more tenderness of expression? In spite of all the cursed endeavours of unreasonable power, is it possible to find a better natural capacity? and isn't it certainly a mortal sin villainously to spoil such an admirable genius? to be desirous of obscuring the brightness of such a mind in ignorance and stupidity? But love has begun to pull off the mask; and if by the favour of some lucky star I can be able to deal with this mere animal, this traitor, this hang-dog, this scoundrel, this brute——

Arnolph. Good-bye t'ye.

Horace. Why in such a hurry?

Arnolph. An urgent affair is come into my mind this instant.

Horace. But don't you know anybody (as you live near at hand) that could get admittance into this house? I make free with you, and 'tis not unusual for friends to serve one another on these occasions. At present I've nobody in it but people to watch me; the man and maid both, as I found just now, notwithstanding all that I could do, would not be so civil as to hear me. I had a certain old woman in my interest for some time, of a genius, to say the truth, more than human. She did me

great service at the beginning; but the poor woman has been dead these four days. Can't you put me in some way?

Arnolph. No, really; you'll find out some without me.

Horace. Farewell then. You see what confidence I put in you.

SCENE V

Arnolph. [Alone.] How I'm obliged to mortify myself before him! What a pain it is to conceal my tormenting anguish! What! a simpleton have so much ready wit! Such the traitress has pretended to be in my sight. Where the devil has her soul sucked in this subtlety? After all, that fatal letter is the death o' me. I find the rascal has corrupted her mind, and by displacing me has fixed himself there. This gives me despair, and mortal pain. I suffer doubly by being robbed of her heart, for thereby love is injured as well as honour. It makes me mad to find my place usurped, and it mads me also to see my prudent measures defeated. I'm sensible that to punish her guilty passion, I need only leave her to her evil destiny, and that she herself would revenge me upon herself; but it's very grievous to lose the thing one loves. Heavens! after making use of so much philosophy in my choice, why must I be so mightily bewitched by her charms? She has neither parents, friends, nor money; she abuses my care, my favours, my tenderness; and yet I love her, even after this base affair, so much that I'm unable to throw off this fondness. Fool! hast thou no shame? Oh, I burst! I rave! and I could box myself a thousand times. I'll step in a little, but only to see how she looks after so vile an action. Heaven grant that my brows may be free from dishonour! but if 'tis decreed that I must suffer it, bestow upon me at least that fortitude which some people are endowed with to bear such accidents!

ACT IV

SCENE I

Arnolph. I can't be easy, I must confess, in any place; for my mind is under a thousand perplexities how to manage things both within doors and without, so as to disappoint the projects of this coxcomb. With what an assurance the traitress bore the sight o' me! She's not at all concerned at what she has

done; and though she has brought me within an inch of the grave, one would swear, to look at her, that she had not the least hand in it. The more she appeared composed when I saw her, the more was I enraged, and those boiling transports which inflamed my heart, seemed only to redouble my ardent passion. I was provoked, vexed, incensed against her, and yet I never saw her look so handsome; her eyes, methought, never were before so piercing, never did they before inspire me with such violent desires; and I perceive 'twould kill me should my evil destiny bring this disgrace upon me. What? Have I brought her up with so much tenderness and precaution? Have I taken her to me from her infancy? Have I indulged the fondest hopes? Must I build upon her growing charms? And during thirteen years have I fondled her to be my own, as I imagined, for a young fool whom she's in love with to come and run away with her before my face, and that even when she's half married to me? No, by heavens, my foolish young friend; by heavens, no. You must be a cunning fellow to overturn my scheme, or else, by my faith, I shall render all your hopes abortive, and you'll find no cause to laugh at me.

SCENE II

A Notary, Arnolph.

Notary. O there he is! Good-morrow t'ye. I'm ready to draw up the contract as you desire.

Arnolph. [Not seeing or hearing him.] How must it be done?

Notary. It must be in the usual form.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] I'll use the utmost precaution possible.

Notary. I'll do nothing contrary to your interest.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] I must guard against any surprise.

Notary. 'Tis enough that your affairs are put into my hands. You must by no means sign the contract before you receive the portion, for fear of being cheated.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] I'm afraid, should I make any discovery, 'twould become a public town-talk.

Notary. But it is mighty easy to prevent a discovery; your contract may be transacted privately.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] But how shall I settle the point with her?

Notary. The jointure should be in proportion to the fortune she brings you.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] I love her, and that love is the great difficulty I labour under.

Notary. In that case the wife may have so much the more.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] How to behave to her on such an occasion?

Notary. The law says, the husband that is to be shall settle upon the wife that is to be the third part of her portion; but the law signifies nothing at all, you may do a great deal more than that if you've a mind to it.

Arnolph. [Not seeing him.] If—

[*Perceiving the Notary.*]

Notary. As for the presents to be made, let them agree together. I say the husband that is to be may jointure the wife that is to be just as he thinks fit.

Arnolph. Heh!

Notary. He may give her so much and more, if he loves her greatly, and is desirous to oblige her, and that by way of jointure or settlement as they call it, to be lost and go away entirely to the right heirs of the said wife that is to be, upon her decease; or else according to the statute, as people have a mind; or as a gift, by a deed in form which may be made either single or mutual. Wherefore do you shrug? talk I like a fool, or don't I understand the manner of a contract? Who is it can teach me? Nobody, I presume. Don't I know that when they are married they have in law an equal right to all movables, monies, immovables, and acquisitions, unless they give it up by an act of renunciation? Don't I know that a third part of the portion of the wife that is to be, becomes in common, for—

Arnolph. Ay, to be sure you know all this; but who says one word t'ye about it?

Notary. You, who seem to take me for a fool, by shrugging up your shoulders, and making faces at me.

Arnolph. Plague take the fellow with his puppy's face. Fare you well; that's the way to make you have done.

Notary. Was not I fetched hither to draw up a contract?

Arnolph. Yes, I sent for you; but the affair is put off, and I'll send for you again when the time is fixed. What a devil of a fellow this is with his jabbering!

Notary. [Alone.] I think he's mad, and I believe I think right too.

SCENE III

*The Notary, Allen, Georgetta.**Notary.* Did not you come to fetch me to your master?*Allen.* Yes.*Notary.* I don't know what you may take him for, but go and tell him from me, that he's an arrant fool.*Georgetta.* We won't fail to do it.

SCENE IV

*Arnolph, Allen, Georgetta.**Allen.* Sir—*Arnolph.* Come hither, you are my faithful, my good, my real friends, and I've some news for you.*Allen.* The notary—*Arnolph.* No matter, some other time for that. A wicked design is contrived against my honour; and what a disgrace would it be for you, children, to have your master's honour taken from him? After that you'd not dare appear in any place, for whoever sees you would point at you. Therefore, since the affair concerns you as much as me, you must take such care, for your part, that this spark may not in any manner—*Georgetta.* You've taught us our lesson already.*Arnolph.* But beware of listening to his fair speeches.*Allen.* O! to be sure.—*Georgetta.* We know how to deny him.*Arnolph.* Suppose he should come now in a wheedling manner; Allen, my dear heart, cheer up my drooping spirits by a little of your assistance.*Allen.* You're a fool.*Arnolph.* Right. [To *Georgetta*.] Georgetta, my pretty face, you seem so sweet-tempered, and so good a body.*Georgetta.* You're an oaf.*Arnolph.* Right. [To *Allen*.] What harm is there, d'ye think, in an honest and virtuous design?*Allen.* You're a rogue.*Arnolph.* Mighty well. [To *Georgetta*.] I shall certainly die, if you take no pity on the pains I suffer.*Georgetta.* You're a blockhead, an impudent fellow.*Arnolph.* Very good. [To *Allen*.] I'm not a person that desires something for nothing; I know how to remember services that are done me. However, Allen, there's somewhat to make

you drink beforehand; and there's to buy you an under-petticoat, Georgetta. [*Both hold out their hands and take the money.*] This is only an earnest of my kindness; and all the favour I request of you is only to let me see your pretty mistress.

Georgetta. [*Pushing him.*] None o' your tricks upon us.

Arnolph. That's good.

Allen. [*Pushing him.*] Get you gone.

Arnolph. Right.

Georgetta. [*Pushing him.*] This moment.

Arnolph. Very well. Hold, enough.

Georgetta. Don't I do right?

Allen. Is this the way you'd have us behave to him?

Arnolph. Yes, it's mighty well, except as to the money, which you mustn't take.

Georgetta. We didn't think o' that.

Allen. Would you have us begin again just now?

Arnolph. No; 'tis enough, go in both of you.

Allen. You need only speak.

Arnolph. No, I tell you, go in when I desire you. You may keep the money; go, I'll come to you again; have an eye to everything, and second my endeavours.

SCENE V

Arnolph. [*Alone.*] I'll get the cobbler at the corner of our street to be a spy for me; I design to keep her always within doors, set a good guard upon her, and above all banish your sellers of ribbons, tire-women, milliners, handkerchief-makers, glove-washers, and frippery-women, all those gentry who make it their daily business to help on your love intrigues. In short, I've seen the world, and understand the tricks of it, and my spark shall be mighty cunning if he get admittance for either letter or message.

SCENE VI

Horace, Arnolph.

Horace. It's happy for me to meet you here; I had a very fair escape e'en now, I assure you. As I went from you, I saw Agnes unexpectedly in the balcony all alone, enjoying the cool breezes from the trees just by. After having made me a sign, she found means some way or other to get down into the garden, and open me the door. But we were scarce both of us in her chamber, before she heard her jealous pate upon the stairs;

and all she possibly could do at such a pinch, was to lock me up in a large press for clothes. He came into the room immediately. I didn't see him, but I heard him walk to and fro at a great rate, without speaking a word, but sighing grievously now and then, and sometimes giving great thumps upon the table, striking a little dog that fawned upon him, and flinging about in a mad manner whatever came in his way; he broke in his passion the very flower pots with which the fair one had set out her chimney; and without doubt the trick she has played must have come to the ear of this cuckold in embryo. At last, after having by twenty such tricks discharged his fury on things that could not help it, my jealous, restless gentleman, without saying what disturbed him, left the chamber, and I my press. We were unwilling to venture staying together any longer for fear of somebody, 'twould have been running too great a risk. But to-night, when it's late, I'm to get into her chamber without making any noise; the sign for her to know me is to be three hems, and then the window will be opened, at which, by a ladder and the assistance of Agnes, love will try to gain admittance for me. This I tell to you as my only friend. Joy increases by being revealed; and should one taste the utmost happiness a hundred times over, 'twould not be satisfactory unless 'twere known by somebody. You'll take part, I believe, in the success of my affairs. Adieu, I'm going to take care of what is necessary.

SCENE VII

Arnolph. [Alone.] What, will my persecuting stars allow me no time to breathe? Blow after blow! Am I fated by them to find all my wisdom and vigilance defeated? And shall I in the meridian of my life be made a fool of by a simple girl, and a shatterbrained young fellow? For twenty years past, like a discreet philosopher, I've been contemplating the unhappy destiny of married men, and have carefully informed myself of all the accidents which plunge the most prudent into misfortune. Pondering in my own mind, and profiting by the disgraces of others (it being my intent to marry), I have endeavoured to find the way of securing my brows from all affronts, and prevent their matching with other foreheads. For this noble purpose I imagined I had put in practice whatever human policy could invent, but as if it was decreed by fate that no man on earth should be exempted from it, after all the light and experience that I could possibly gain in these matters,

after more than twenty years studying how to conduct myself warily through the whole affair, have I acted contrary to the practice of so many husbands, to find myself involved in the very same disgrace at last? Ah! cruel destiny, thou art a liar! I'm still in possession of the desired object; and if her heart is stolen from me by this unlucky spark, I'll prevent him however from seizing anything else, and to-night, which they intend for this piece of gallantry, shall not be spent so agreeably as they imagine. It's some pleasure to me, amidst so much uneasiness, that I've notice of the snare prepared for me, and that this blunderer who would be fatal to me, makes his own rival his confidant.

SCENE VIII

Chrisaldus, Arnolph.

Chrisaldus. Well, shall we sup before our walk?

Arnolph. No, I fast to-night.

Chrisaldus. Whence comes this whim?

Arnolph. Pray now excuse me, I've something else that hinders me.

Chrisaldus. Isn't the wedding you resolved upon to be performed?

Arnolph. That's troubling yourself too much with other people's business.

Chrisaldus. Oho, so snappish! What is it disturbs you? Have you met with any little misfortune in love, my friend? By your countenance I'd almost swear you have.

Arnolph. Let what will befall me, I shall at least have the advantage of being unlike certain people, who quietly suffer gallants to make their visits.

Chrisaldus. It's a strange thing, that with so much discernment, you should always take fright upon this affair, that you should place your sovereign happiness in this, and imagine no other kind of honour in the world. To be a miser, a brute, a villain, a bully, and coward is nothing in your opinion, compared with this blot; and in whatsoever manner a man may have lived, he is a man of honour if he's not a cuckold. To come closer to the purpose, why will you suppose that all our glory depends on such an accident? And that a virtuous mind has anything to reproach itself for the injustice of a vicious one which it could not help? Why will you, I say, imagine that in taking a wife one deserves either praise or blame for the choice one

makes, and form a most horrible monster of the affront that is done one by her falsehood? Be persuaded that a man of honour may have a less frightful notion of cuckoldom; that none being secure from the strokes of fortune, this accident should be thought in itself indifferent; and in short, that all the harm of it, let the world pretend what it will, lies only in the manner of our bearing it. To behave well under these difficulties, one must, as well as in all others, avoid extremes; not be like those over-good-natured people, who, proud of such affairs, are inviting their wives' gallants continually, praising 'em in all places, and crying up their good qualities; who appear exactly of their humour, come to all their treats and meetings, and give everybody reason to wonder at their having the assurance to show their faces there. This way of acting is certainly highly blameable, but t'other extreme is no less to be condemned. As I don't approve of such as are friends to their wives' gallants, I am no more for those violent people whose indiscreet resentment full of rage and fury, draws the eyes of all the world upon them by its noise, and who, by the bustle they make, appear unwilling that anybody should be ignorant what they are. There's a medium between these two extremes, where a wise man stops upon such an occasion. When a body knows how to take it, there's no cause to be ashamed for the worst a wife can do. In short, whatever people say of it, cuckoldom may be easily made to appear less frightful, and as I told you before, all the dexterity lies in knowing how to turn the fair side outwards.

Arnolph. After this fine harangue, the whole fraternity ought to thank your worship, and anybody that hears you speak must rejoice to find himself enrolled amongst the number.

Chrisaldus. I don't say that, for 'tis what I blame: but as a wife is the gift of fortune, one should do, I say, as at dice, where if what you expect doesn't come up, you must make use of dexterity and temper to amend your luck by good conduct.

Arnolph. That is to say, always eat and sleep quietly, and persuade yourself it signifies just nothing.

Chrisaldus. You think to make a jest on't: but to deal sincerely with you, I know a hundred things in the world that are to be dreaded more, and which I should think a much greater misfortune than the accident you're so terribly afraid of. Do you imagine, was I forced to make my choice, that I shouldn't rather like to be what you say, than to be married to one of those good women whose perverseness makes a quarrel

out of nothing. Those dragons of virtue, those honest she-devils, who pique themselves continually upon their wise conduct, who, because they don't do us a slight injury, take upon 'em to behave haughtily, and expect for their being true to us, that we should bear everything from 'em. Once more, friend, let me tell you, that cuckoldom is really nothing but what one makes it, that it may be even wished for on some accounts, and that it has its pleasures as well as other things.

Arnolph. If you're of a temper to be contented under it, I've no mind to try it for my part, and rather than submit to such a thing—

Chrisaldus. Bless me, don't swear for fear of being perjured. If fate ordains it so, your precautions are all to no purpose; your advice will not be taken about the matter.

Arnolph. Shall I be a cuckold?

Chrisaldus. You are grievously hurt. A thousand people are so, without disparagement to you, who for person, courage, wealth, and family, would think it an affront to be compared with you.

Arnolph. For my part, I shall make no comparisons with them. But, in one word, this raillery is troublesome; let's ha' done with it, if you please.

Chrisaldus. You're in a passion; we shall find out the cause of it. Fare you well: but, remember, whatever your honour may make you imagine as to this affair, that it is being half what we were talking of, to swear you will not be so.

Arnolph. Again, I swear it, and am going this instant to find out a good remedy against that accident.

[*Running to knock at his door*

SCENE IX

Arnolph, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. My friends, now's the time that I implore your assistance. I'm satisfied of your love for me: but it must be shown on this occasion; and if you serve me, as I assure myself you will, you may be certain of a reward. The man you know of (but not a word) intends, as I understand, to trick me this very night, and get by a ladder into Agnes's chamber. But we three must lay a trap for him. I'd have each of you take a good cudgel, and when he's almost at the top round of the ladder (for I'll open the window in the nick of time), both of you fall upon the rascal for me, in such a manner that his back

may be sure to remember it, and teach him to come there no more. However, don't mention me at all, nor make any appearance of my being behind. Should you have the courage to execute my resentment?

Allen. If he's only to be thrashed, sir, depend upon us, you shall see whether I strike with a dead man's arm or not.

Georgetta. Though mine seems not so strong, it shall play its part in drubbing him.

Arnolph. Go you in then, and above all things, be careful not to tattle. [Alone.] This is a useful lesson for my neighbour, and if all the husbands in this town were to receive their wives' gallants in the same manner, the number of cuckolds would not be so great.

ACT V

SCENE I

Arnolph, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. Wretches, what have you done by your violence?

Allen. Sir, we've obeyed you.

Arnolph. You endeavour in vain to make that your excuse, you were ordered to beat and not to murder him: 'twas his back and not his head that I commanded you to discharge the blows upon. Heavens! into what a condition has fortune now brought me! what can I think of doing, to see the man dead? Get into the house, and be sure you say not a word of the innocent order I gave you. [Alone.] 'Twill be daylight presently, and I'll go ask advice how I must conduct myself under this misfortune. Alas! what will become of me? And what will the father say, when he comes to be informed of this unexpected accident?

SCENE II

Arnolph, Horace.

Horace. [Aside.] I must go inquire a little who it is.

Arnolph. [Thinking himself alone.] Could one ever have foreseen—[Being run against by Horace.] Who's there, pray?

Horace. Is it you, Mr. Arnolph?

Arnolph. Yes, but who are you?—

Horace. Horace; I was going to your house to beg a favour of you. You're abroad very early.

Arnolph. [Low aside.] Surprising! Is it an enchantment? Is it a vision?

Horace. To say the truth, I have been in abundance of trouble, and I thank Heaven's great goodness for meeting you here thus luckily. I'm going to tell you how everything has succeeded even much better than I durst have promised, and that too by an accident which might have ruined all. I don't know how the assignation we had made could possibly come to be suspected; but just as I was got to the window I saw some people appear contrary to my expectation, who striking furiously at me, made me miss my step and tumble to the very ground: which fall, at the expense of a bruise, saved me from a hearty drubbing. These people (amongst whom my jealous pate, I suppose, was one) imagined my fall to be occasioned by the force of their blows; and as my pain made me lie a good while motionless on the spot, they believed verily that they had knocked me o' the head; which immediately alarmed 'em all. I heard their noise with a profound silence. They accused one another of the violence, and complaining of their hard fate, came softly, without any light, to feel if I was dead. I leave you to guess whether or no in the night I could not put on the appearance of a real dead body. They went away very much terrified: and as I was considering how to get off, young Agnes, whom my pretended death had frightened, came to me in great concern. (For she had heard what the people said to one another, and being less observed during all this bustle, she easily slipped out of the house.) But finding I was not hurt, she appeared in a transport hardly to be expressed. What shall I say more t'ye? At last this charming creature has followed the dictates of her love, and being unwilling to go home any more, has committed herself entirely to my trust. You may find a little, by this harmless proceeding, how much the gross impertinence of a fool exposes her, and what a dreadful risk she might have run had I a less sincere regard for her; but my heart burns with too pure a flame, and I would rather die than injure her. I see charms in her which deserve a better fate, and nothing but death shall part us. I foresee my father's anger, but we shall find a time to appease his wrath. I yield to her tender charms, and in short, we must please ourselves in life. The favour, therefore, I would beg of you (relying on your secrecy and sincerity), is, that I may put this beauty into your hands, and that you'll so far assist my passion, as to conceal her in your house for a day or two at least. For, besides,

that her going off should be kept from everybody to prevent any certain pursuit after her, you are sensible that a girl of her beauty would be strangely suspected in the company of a young man; and as I have trusted you with the whole secret of my passion, being well assured of your prudence, so to you only, as a generous friend, can I commit this beloved treasure.

Arnolph. I am, you need make no doubt, entirely at your service.

Horace. And will you do me this kind office?

Arnolph. Very readily, I assure you; I'm overjoyed at this opportunity of serving you, and thank Heaven for giving it me. I never did anything with so much pleasure.

Horace. How much am I obliged to you for your goodness! I was afraid you'd make a difficulty of doing it; but you understand the world, and your wisdom can excuse the heat of youth. One of my servants waits with her at the corner of that turning.

Arnolph. But how shall we manage? for the day begins to break. If I take her here, perhaps I shall be seen, and if you should come to my house the servants will tattle. To act the safest way, she must be brought to me in some place that's darker. That alley of mine is convenient, I'll go wait for her there.

Horace. 'Tis very right to use these precautions; for my part, I shall do no more than put her into your hands, and then get me home immediately without saying anything.

Arnolph. [Alone.] Ah, fortune! This propitious accident makes amends for all the mischief thy caprice has done me.

[*Throws his cloak over his face.*

SCENE III

Agnes, Horace, Arnolph.

Horace. [To *Agnes*.] Don't be uneasy about the place I'm carrying you to, 'tis a lodging you'll be very safe in; 'twould ruin all for you to be with me. Go in at this door, and be conducted. [Arnolph takes her hand without her knowing him.

Agnes. [To *Horace*] Wherefore do you leave me?

Horace. Dear Agnes, it must be so.

Agnes. Remember then, pray now, to come back speedily.

Horace. My passion urges me to that sufficiently.

Agnes. I feel no joy but when you're in my sight.

Horace. When from your presence, I'm melancholy likewise.

Agnes. Alack! you'd stay here, if that was true.

Horace. What! can you doubt of my excessive love?

Agnes. Nay, you don't love me so much as I love you.
[*Arnolph pulls her.*] Oh! you pull me too hard.

Horace. Dear Agnes, that's because 'tis dangerous for us two to be seen here; and this true friend who pulls you so, is prudently zealous for our service.

Agnes. But to follow a stranger, who—

Horace. Don't fear anything, you cannot but be well in such hands.

Agnes. I should think myself much better in Horace's; and I should—[*To Arnolph who pulls her again.*] Stay a little.

Horace. Fare you well. The day drives me away.

Agnes. When shall I see you then?

Horace. Very soon, you may be sure.

Agnes. How uneasy I shall be till that time comes!

Horace. Heaven be thanked, my happiness is no longer in suspense, and now I may sleep securely.

SCENE IV

Arnolph, Agnes.

Arnolph. [Concealed under his cloak, and disquising his voice.] Come along, I shan't let you lodge here; I've prepared an apartment elsewhere for you, and intend to place you where you may be safe enough. [Discovering himself.] D'ye know me?

Agnes. [Knowing him.] Hah!

Arnolph. The sight of me frightens you on this occasion, hussy; and 'tis much against your will to find me here. I interrupt the love-contrivances you've in your head. [*Agnes looks if she can't see Horace.*] Don't imagine your eyes can call back your spark to help you, he's gone too far to give you any assistance. Ha, ha, so young, and yet to play these pranks. Your extraordinary seeming ignorance inquired if children were produced at the ear, though you know well enough how to make assignations by night, and can steal away very silently to run after a gallant. Odsbobs, how flippant your tongue was with him! sure you must have been at some rare school. Who the deuce has taught you all this so suddenly? You're no longer it seems afraid of sprites? This gallant has given you courage in the night-time. Ah! baggage, to arrive at this deceit! to form such a design, notwithstanding all my kindness. Thou'rt a little serpent that I've warmed in my bosom, which when it

comes to its feeling, ungratefully tries to mischief him that cherished it.

Agnes. Why d'ye scold at me?

Arnolph. I'm much in the wrong truly.

Agnes. I don't know any harm in all this that I've done.

Arnolph. Isn't running after a gallant a scandalous action?

Agnes. 'Tis a man that says he'll marry me. I followed your directions; for you told me one must marry to take away the guilt.

Arnolph. Ay, but I intended to marry you myself, and methinks I let you know my meaning plain enough.

Agnes. Yes, but to tell you freely between you and I, he's more according to my liking for a husband than you are. Matrimony with you is a troublesome uneasy thing, and you give a terrible description of it; but a-lack-a-day! he represents it so brimful of pleasures, that it makes one have a mind to be married.

Arnolph. Ah! traitress! that's because you love him.

Agnes. I do love him indeed.

Arnolph. And have you the impudence to tell me so?

Agnes. Why if it's true, mayn't I say so?

Arnolph. Ought you to love him, impertinence?

Agnes. Lack-a-day! can I help it? He only is the cause on't; I didn't think of it till it was over.

Arnolph. But you should have discarded that amorous desire.

Agnes. How can a body discard what is agreeable?

Arnolph. And don't you know that it displeases me?

Agnes. Not at all. What harm can it do you?

Arnolph. Very true, I've reason to rejoice at it. You don't love me then at this rate.

Agnes. You!

Arnolph. Ay.

Agnes. Alack! no.

Arnolph. How! no.

Agnes. Would you ha' me tell a lie?

Arnolph. Why don't you love me, Madam Impudence?

Agnes. Lack-a-day, you shouldn't blame me. Why didn't you make yourself beloved as he did? I didn't hinder you from it that I know of.

Arnolph. I endeavoured it all I could, but my pains were to no purpose.

Agnes. Then he understands it better than you do, for he made me love him without any pains at all.

Arnolph. [Aside.] Observe how the jade answers and argues! Plague! could one of your witty ladies have said more? Ah! I did not well know her, or else, by my faith, in these cases a simple woman understands more than the wisest man. [To Agnes.] Since you're so good at reasoning, Mrs. Chop-Logic, is there any reason why I should maintain you so long a time at my own charge for him?

Agnes. No, he'll repay you all, even to the last farthing.

Arnolph. [Aside.] She hits upon certain words which give me double vexation. [To Agnes.] Is it in his power, hussy, to repay me the obligations you have to me?

Agnes. I have no such great ones as you think.

Arnolph. Is it nothing to take care of your education from your infancy?

Agnes. You've been at great pains about that matter truly, and have caused me to be bravely instructed in everything. D'ye imagine I flatter myself so far as not to know in my own mind that I'm entirely ignorant? I'm ashamed on't myself, and at this age won't pass any longer for a fool, if I can help it.

Arnolph. You hate ignorance, and are resolved, whatever it costs, to learn something of your spark.

Agnes. To be sure. 'Tis of him that I know what I do know, and I think myself more obliged to him than you.

Arnolph. I can't tell what should hinder me from revenging this saucy language with my fist. I'm distracted at the sight of her provoking coldness, and beating her would be a satisfaction to me.

Agnes. Lack-a-day! you may do it if that would please you.

Arnolph. [Aside.] That speech and that look disarm my fury, and produce a return of tenderness which effaces all her guilt. How strange is it to be in love! and that men should be subject to such weakness for these traitresses! Everybody knows their imperfection; they're nothing but extravagance and indiscretion; their mind is wicked and their understanding weak; nothing is more frail, nothing more unsteady, nothing more false, and yet for all that one does everything in the world for the sake of these animals. [To Agnes.] Well, let us make peace. Go, thou little traitress, I forgive thee all, and now am fond of thee again. Learn by this how much I love thee, and seeing I'm so good, love thou me in return.

Agnes. I'd oblige you at any rate, with all my heart, if 'twas in my power.

Arnolph. My dear life, thou canst if thou wouldest. Do but

hear that amorous sigh, behold this dying look, contemplate my person, and ha' done with this young coxcomb, and the love he offers thee. He must certainly have put some spell upon thee, and thou'l be a hundred times more happy with me. Thy strong passion is to be fine and gay, and I protest thou shalt always be so. I shall be fondling thee continually both night and day; I shall hug thee, and kiss thee, and eat thee up. Thou shalt do everything thou hast a mind to; which is saying all that can be said without coming to particulars. [Aside.] How far will my passion go? [Aloud.] Nothing really can be equal to my love. What proof of it wouldest thou have me give thee, ungrateful girl? Wouldest thou behold me weep? Wouldest thou have me beat myself? Wouldest thou have me tear off half my hair? Wouldest thou have me kill myself? Ay, say if thou wouldest have me do it, I'm entirely ready, cruel creature, to convince thee of my love.

Agnes. Hold; all your talking does not touch my heart; Horace with two words would have wrought upon it more than you.

Arnolph. Heh! this is too great an insult, provoking my rage too far. I'll pursue my design, you untractable brute, and pack you out of town immediately. You reject my addresses and drive me to extremity, but a convent shall be my revenge for all.

SCENE V

Arnolph, Agnes, Allen.

Allen. I don't know how 'tis, sir, but methought Agnes and the dead corpse went away together.

Arnolph. Here she is. Go shut her up in my chamber. [Aside.] He won't come there to seek her. Besides, it's only for half an hour. I'll go get a coach, that I may put her in a securer place. Fasten yourselves in well, and be sure don't let her be out o' sight. [Alone.] When she is once in the country she may perhaps be undeceived as to this love business.

SCENE VI

Horace, Arnolph.

Horace. O! I'm come to find you, quite overwhelmed with sorrow. Heaven, Mr. Arnolph, has decreed my ill-fortune; and by a fatal stroke of extreme injustice they would tear from me the fair one whom I love. My father is just arrived, I found

him alighted at an inn hard by, and in short, the reason of his coming, which I told you before I did not know, is, that he has made a match for me without writing me one word about it, and is come to this place to celebrate the nuptials. Judge you, by the part you bear in my uneasiness, whether a more shocking disappointment could have befallen me. That Henriques, whom I asked you about yesterday, is the cause of all my misfortune; he's come along with my father to complete my ruin, and 'tis his only daughter for whom I'm destined. I thought I should have swooned when first they spoke of it, and not caring to hear any more on't, (as my father talked of paying you a visit), I hasted hither beforehand, with a mind full of consternation. I beseech you take care not to let him know anything of my engagement, which might incense him; and as he puts a great confidence in you, pray now endeavour to dissuade him from this other match.

Arnolph. Ay, ay.

Horace. Advise him to put it off a little, and as a friend, assist my passion in this particular.

Arnolph. I won't fail of doing it.

Horace. My hopes are all in you.

Arnolph. Very well.

Horace. I look upon you as my real father. Tell him that my age—Ah! I see him coming; hear the reasons I can furnish you with.

SCENE VII

Henriques, Orontes, Chrisaldus, Horace, Arnolph.

Horace and Arnolph retire to a corner of the stage, and whisper.

Henriques. [To *Chrisaldus.*] As soon as ever I saw you, though I hadn't been told, I should have known you. I recollect the features of your lovely sister, whom marriage once made mine; happy should I have been had cruel destiny permitted me to bring back that faithful wife; to enjoy with me the sensible delight of seeing again all her relations after our long misfortunes. But since the irresistible power of fate has deprived us for ever of her dear company, let us endeavour and resolve to be contented with the only fruit that remains of our loves. It concerns you nearly; and without your consent I should do wrong to dispose of this pledge. The choice of the son of Orontes is in itself honourable, but you must be pleased in this choice as well as I.

Chrisaldus. 'Tis having a bad opinion of my judgment, to doubt my approbation of so reasonable a choice.

Arnolph. [Aside to Horace.] Ay, I'll serve you in the best manner.

Horace. [Aside to Arnolph.] But beware of one thing—

Arnolph. [To Horace.] Be under no concern.

[*Arnolph quits Horace to embrace Orontes.*

Orontes. [To Arnolph.] O! how full of tenderness is this embrace!

Arnolph. How much I rejoice to see you!

Orontes. I'm come hither—

Arnolph. I know what brings you, without your telling me.

Orontes. Have you been informed already?

Arnolph. Yes.

Orontes. So much the better.

Arnolph. Your son opposes this match, and his heart being pre-engaged looks upon it as a misfortune. He even desired me to dissuade you from it; and for my part, all the advice I can give you is to exert the authority of a father, and not let the wedding be deferred. Young people should be governed with a high hand, we do 'em harm by being indulgent to 'em.

Horace. [Aside.] Oh! traitor!

Chrisaldus. If it's against his inclination, I think we should not force him. My brother, I believe, will be of my opinion.

Arnolph. What! will he suffer himself to be governed by his son? Would you have a father be so weak as not to know how to make youth obey him? 'Twould really be mighty fine to see him at this time of life receiving laws from one who ought to receive 'em of him. No, no, he's my intimate friend, and his honour is mine, his promise is given, and he must perform it. Let him now show his resolution, and force his son's affections.

Orontes. You say right, and to what regards this match I'll be answerable for my son's obedience.

Chrisaldus. [To Arnolph.] For my part, I'm surprised at the great eagerness you show for this match, and can't conceive what motive inspires you—

Arnolph. I know what I know, and speak what I ought to speak.

Orontes. Ay, ay, Mr. Arnolph, he's—

Chrisaldus. That name displeases him; 'tis Mr. de la Souche as you've been told already.

Arnolph. It's no matter.

Horace. [Aside.] What is this I hear?

Arnolph. [Turning towards *Horace*.] Ay, there lies the secret, and you may judge what I ought to do.

Horace. [Aside.] Into what uneasiness—

SCENE VIII

Henriques, Orontes, Chrisaldus, Horace, Arnolph, Georgetta.

Georgetta. Sir, if you don't come, we shall have much ado to keep Agnes; she'll run all hazards to get away, and will perhaps fling herself out at window.

Arnolph. Bring her to me, for I intend to take her away from hence immediately. [To *Horace*.] Don't you be troubled at it; continual good fortune would make a man proud, and every one in his turn, as the proverb says.

Horace. O Heaven! What misfortunes can equal mine! and was ever anybody plunged in such an abyss as I am!

Arnolph. [To *Orontes*.] Hasten the day of the ceremony, I desire it may be so, and invite myself to it already.

Orontes. That really is my design.

SCENE IX

Agnes, Orontes, Henriques, Arnolph, Horace, Chrisaldus, Allen, Georgetta.

Arnolph. [To *Agnes*.] Come hither, pretty face, come hither, you who are headstrong and can't be managed; here's your spark, to whom, as an amends, you may make an humble and obliging curtsey. [To *Horace*.] Fare you well. The event is a little contrary to your wishes, but all lovers are not fortunate.

Agnes. D'ye let me be carried away in this manner, *Horace*?

Horace. My affliction is so great I know not where I am.

Arnolph. Come along, with your tittle-tattle, come along.

Agnes. I'll stay here.

Orontes. Explain to us this mystery; we stare one at another, without being able to comprehend it.

Arnolph. I'll tell you at a more convenient time. Your servant.

Orontes. And whither d'ye mean to go? You don't tell us what we want you should tell us.

Arnolph. I have advised you, in spite of his murmuring, to conclude the match.

Orontes. Yes, but in order to conclude it (if you were told all), were you not informed that she we mean is in your house, and that she's the daughter of the lovely Angelica, which she had privately by Mr. Henriques? What could be the reason of your talk just now?

Chrisaldus. I was likewise surprised to see his behaviour.

Arnolph. What?

Chrisaldus. My sister, by a private marriage, had one daughter, who was concealed from the whole family.

Orontes. And under feigned names, to prevent discovery, was by her husband put out to nurse in the country.

Chrisaldus. At which time, fortune being his foe, he was forced to leave his native land.

Orontes. And to undergo a thousand different dangers in places beyond sea.

Chrisaldus. Where his industry has acquired what envy and rougery tore from him in his own country.

Orontes. At his return into France he immediately sought after her whom he had entrusted with the care of his daughter.

Chrisaldus. And the countrywoman told him plainly, that at four years old she had put her into your hands.

Orontes. That she did so on account of your charity, being herself oppressed with extreme poverty.

Chrisaldus. And he, full of transport and satisfaction, has even brought the woman hither.

Orontes. In short, you'll see her come here presently to clear up this mystery to everybody.

Chrisaldus. [To *Arnolph.*] I guess pretty nearly what a punishment this must be to you. But fate is kind to you in the affair; since to be no cuckold seems to you so great a happiness, the certain way of attaining it is for you not to marry.

Arnolph. [Going away in a violent passion, and unable to speak.] Oh!

SCENE X

Henriques, Orontes, Chrisaldus, Agnes, Horace.

Orontes. How comes it he runs away without saying anything?

Horace. Ah, father! you shall know the whole of this surprising mystery. Accident has here brought to pass the same thing which your prudence intended; to this fair creature I was engaged strictly by the endearing ties of mutual love. She's

the very person you came to seek after, and my refusal for her sake I imagined would have angered you.

Henriques. I made no doubt of it from the moment I saw her, and my heart has yearned after her ever since. Ah, my daughter! I yield to such tender transports.

Chrisaldus. I could do so with all my heart, brother, as well as you; but this is not a proper place for it; let us go into the house to clear up these mysteries, to discharge the obligations we owe our friend, and give thanks to Heaven which orders all things for the best.

THE
SCHOOL FOR WIVES CRITICISED
(A COMEDY)

THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES CRITICISED, *a Comedy of One Act in Prose*
acted at the Theatre of the Palace-Royal the 1st of June, 1663.

Molière for a long time made no other opposition to the criticisms which were published upon *The School for Wives*, than the continued representations of the piece itself, which were always crowded, nor was he at any pains to suppress them, in part at least, until the month of June, 1663, when he brought out his comedy called *The School for Wives Criticised*. The subject seemed only proper for a dissertation, and consequently admitted of neither intrigue nor catastrophe. But Molière never lost sight of the object which a comic writer ought always to have in view in whatever kind of performances he brings on the stage. He knew, from what had passed in the circles of Paris whilst *The School for Wives* was talked of, to draw a faithful image of one part of civil life by copying the language and character of the common conversations of the people of fashion. By the choice of ridiculous characters, which he introduced, he appears to have had it as much in view to satirise his censurers as to apologise for his piece: seduced perhaps by the tendency of human spleen, which makes people think they can't so well defend themselves as by attacking others. Boursault at the same time played at the Hôtel de Bourgogne *The Counter-Critic*, or *The Painter's Picture*, in which he followed Molière's plan and manner, but went too far in supposing a known key to *The School for Wives*, which pointed out the originals copied from nature.

ACTORS

URANIA.

ELIZA.

CLIMENE.

THE MARQUIS.

DORANTES, or THE KNIGHT.

LYSIDAS, a poet.

GALOPIN, a lackey.

SCENE: *Paris, in the house of Urania.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Urania, Eliza.

Urania. What, cousin, is nobody come to visit you?

Eliza. Not a soul.

Urania. I am astonished truly, that we have both of us been alone this whole day.

Eliza. It astonishes me too; for 'tis by no means our custom, and your house, thank Heaven, is the ordinary refuge of all the saunterers about court.

Urania. The afternoon, to say the truth, seems long to me.

Eliza. And I think it very short.

Urania. That's because your fine wits, cousin, love solitude.

Eliza. O! your fine wits most obedient; you know I don't aim at that.

Urania. For my part, I confess, I love company.

Eliza. So do I too; but I love select company, and the great number of foolish visits one must endure amongst your other sorts, is very often the reason why I take pleasure in being alone.

Urania. 'Tis too great delicacy, not to be able to bear any but your choice people.

Eliza. And the complaisance is too general to bear indifferently all sorts of people.

Urania. I relish those who are reasonable, and divert myself with the extravagant.

Eliza. In truth, the extravagant don't go far without wearying you, and the greatest part of these sort of people are no more diverting after the second visit. But to the business of your extravagants, won't you rid me of your impertinent marquis? D'ye think always to leave him upon my hands, and that I can hold out against his perpetual puns?

Urania. This is a fashionable language, and they make 'emselves merry with it at court.

Eliza. So much the worse for those who do so, and who rack their brains all day long to talk this obscure jargon. A pretty thing to bring into the conversation of the Louvre, your *double entendres*, raked together from the kennels of the Halles and

Place Maubert! A fine manner of jesting for courtiers, and of a man's showing his wit by coming and saying: Madam, you are at the Place Royal, and all the world sees you three leagues from Paris; for everybody sees you with a good eye; because Bonneuil is a village at three leagues' distance from hence! Is it not very gallant, and very witty? And haven't they who hit upon these pretty puns, reason to be proud of 'em?

Urania. They don't, at the same time, speak this as a piece of wit, for most of those who affect this language know that 'tis ridiculous.

Eliza. Worse still, to take pains to say silly things, and to be sorry jokers on set purpose. I hold 'em less excusable for that, and were I judge, I very well know to what I should condemn all these gentry the punsters.

Urania. Let us have done with this affair, it heats ye a little too much; and let us talk of Dorantes, he's long a-coming, methinks, to the supper we're to have together.

Eliza. Perhaps he has forgot it, and—

SCENE II

Galopin, Urania, Eliza.

Galopin. Madam, here's Clémene come to see you.

Urania. Oh! bless me! what a visit is this?

Eliza. You complain of being alone; so Heaven punishes you for it.

Urania. Quick, go tell her I'm not at home.

Galopin. She is told already that you are.

Urania. And who's the fool that told her so?

Galopin. I, madam.

Urania. Deuce take the little rascal; I shall teach you to give answers of your own head.

Galopin. I'll go tell her, madam, that you won't be at home.

Urania. Stay, ye little ass, and let her come up, since the folly is committed.

Galopin. She's still talking to a man in the street.

Urania. Ah! cousin, how does this visit perplex me at this time!

Eliza. 'Tis true, the woman is naturally troublesome. I always had a furious aversion to her; and, no offence to her quality, she's one of the most stupid asses, that ever pretended to reason.

Urania. The epithet is a little of the strongest.

Eliza. Come, come, she richly deserves it, and something more, if one were to do her justice. Is there a creature more truly, what we call a piece of affectation, than she is, taking the word in the worst signification of it?

Urania. She scorns the name, for all that.

Eliza. True, she scorns the name; but not the thing: for in short, she has it from head to foot, and is the most formal piece in the world. Her whole body seems as 'twere out of joint, and as if the motion of her hips, her shoulders and her head went all by clockwork. She always affects a languishing silly tone of voice; makes faces to make her mouth appear little; and rolls her eyes, to make 'em look large.

Urania. Softly then. If she should happen to overhear——

Eliza. No, no, she's not a-coming up yet. I shall never forget the evening that she was desirous of seeing Damon, on account of the reputation he has, and the things of his that he had published. You know the man, and his natural indolence in keeping up a conversation. She had invited him to supper, as a wit, and never did he appear so much a fool, among half a dozen people whom she designed him as an entertainment for, and who stared upon him, as if he ought not to be made like other men. They all thought he was there to regale the company with his jests; that every word he spoke was to be extraordinary, that he was to make extemporary repartees upon everything that was said, and not call for a glass of wine, but with a witticism. But he deceived 'em by his silence; and the lady was as little satisfied with him, as I was with her.

Urania. Hold your tongue. I'll go receive her at the chamber door.

Eliza. One word more. I would she were married to the marquis we were talking of. The admirable union it would be betwixt a she-coxcomb and a joker.

Urania. Will you hold your tongue? here she is.

SCENE III

Climene, Urania, Eliza, Galopin.

Urania. 'Tis very late truly that——

Climene. Oh! for Heaven's sake, my dear, bid 'em give me a chair immediately.

Urania. [To *Galopin.*] An armed chair here, quick.

Climene. Oh! my stars!

Urania. What's the matter then?

Climene. I can support no longer.

Urania. What ails you?

Climene. I faint.

Urania. Are they vapours, that have seized you?

Climene. No.

Urania. Would you be unlaced?

Climene. O lud, no. Oh!

Urania. What's your illness then? and when did it seize you?

Climene. Above three hours ago, and I brought it from court.

Urania. How?

Climene. As a punishment for my sins, I've just seen that villainous rhapsody of *The School for Wives*. I have still a qualm from the fainting fit it gave me, and shan't come to myself again, I believe, this fortnight or more.

Eliza. See how distempers come, without one's thinking of 'em.

Urania. I don't know what constitution my cousin and I are of; but we were at the same piece the day before yesterday, and we both came away well and jolly.

Climene. What, have you seen it?

Urania. Yes, and heard it from one end to t'other.

Climene. And were you not almost in convulsions, my dear?

Urania. I am not so delicate, thank Heaven; and for my part, I think this play should be more apt to cure people than to make 'em sick.

Climene. Oh! my stars! What is it you say? Can this proposition be advanced by a person who has the least revenue in common sense? D'ye think one can, with impunity, quarrel point-blank with reason as you do? And is there, in the truth of the thing, a mind so famished for drollery, that can taste the silly things this play is seasoned with? For my part, I confess, I could not find the least grain of salt through the whole of it. *Children by the ear*, had, to my thinking, a detestable goût. The *cream tart* turned my stomach; and I thought I should have vomited at the *porridge*.

Eliza. Heavens! most elegantly spoken! I should have thought this piece had been good; but the lady has so persuasive an eloquence, she turns things in so agreeable a manner, that one must be of her opinion in spite of one's own.

Urania. For my part, I ha'n't so much complaisance; and to speak my thoughts, I look upon this play to be one of the most diverting the author has produced.

Climene. Oh! you make me pity you, to talk in this manner;

I can't bear this obscurity of discernment in you. Can one, who has any virtue, find anything agreeable in a piece that keeps one's modesty under a perpetual alarm, and sullies the imagination at every turn?

Eliza. What a pretty manner of speaking is that! How terribly rough you play, madam, in criticism; and how I pity poor Molière for having you for an enemy!

Climene. Believe me, my dear, correct in good earnest your judgment; and for your honour, don't tell it to the world, that this comedy pleased you.

Urania. I? I can't imagine what you found in it shocking to modesty.

Climene. Lack-a-day, all of it; and I do maintain it as fact, that an honest woman can't see it without confusion, I discovered so much ordure and nastiness in it.

Urania. You must have a particular discernment then for ordure; for as to my part, I saw none in it.

Climene. 'Tis, undoubtedly, because you won't see it; for in short, all this ordure is, thank Heaven, naked to the eye. It has not the least cover to hide it; and the boldest eyes are shocked at the nudity of it.

Eliza. Oh!

Climene. Ha, ha, ha!

Urania. But once more, if you please, point me out some of this ordure you speak of.

Climene. Alas, is it necessary to point it out?

Urania. Yes; I only ask of you one passage that was very shocking to you.

Climene. Needs there any other than the scene of that Agnes, when she tells what was taken from her.

Urania. And what do you find smutty in that?

Climene. Ah!

Urania. Pray?

Climene. Fie!

Urania. Nay, but?

Climene. I've nothing to say t'ye.

Urania. For my part, I see no harm in it.

Climene. So much the worse for you.

Urania. Rather so much the better, I think. I look upon things on the side that's shown me; and don't turn 'em about, to find what I ought not to see.

Climene. A lady's modesty—

Urania. A lady's modesty consists not in grimace. It ill

becomes one to be wiser than those who are wise. Affectation in this affair is worse than everything else; and I see nothing so ridiculous as that delicacy of honour which takes everything in ill part, gives a criminal sense to the most innocent words, and is offended at the shadow of things. Believe me, they who make so much ado are not esteemed the honestest women. On the contrary, their mysterious severity, and affected grimace provoke the censure of all the world upon the actions of their lives. People are glad to discover anything to carp at; and to give ye an example, there were some ladies at this play t'other day, over against the box we were in, who by the looks they affected during the whole piece, the turning away their heads, and the hiding their faces, occasioned a hundred silly things being said on their conduct, all round them, that would never have been said without this; and even one of the footmen cried out aloud, that they were more chaste in their ears than in all the rest of their bodies.

Climene. In short one must be blind in this piece, and not seem to see things.

Urania. One ought not to see in it what is not in it.

Climene. Ah! I maintain it once more, that the smuttiness in it puts out one's eyes.

Urania. And I am not of that mind.

Climene. What? does not Agnes, in the passage we are speaking of, say what is visibly shocking to modesty?

Urania. No truly. She says not one word but what, of itself, is decent enough; and if you will conceive something else as couched under it, 'tis you who make the ordure, and not she, since she only speaks of the ribbon that was took from her.

Climene. Hoh! Ribbon as long as you please, but that *my* that she stops at is not put there for nothing. Strange thoughts arise upon this *my*. This *my* is furiously scandalous; and say what you can, you can never defend the insolence of this *my*.

Eliza. True, cousin, I'm for the lady against this *my*. *My* is to the last degree insolent; and you're in the wrong to defend this *my*.

Climene. It has an obscenity that is insupportable.

Eliza. How do you call that word, madam?

Climene. Obscenity, madam.

Eliza. Hoh! good lack-a-day! Obscenity. I don't know the meaning of this word, but I think 'tis the prettiest in the world.

Climene. In short, you see your own relation takes my part.

Urania. O dear! she's a tattling girl, who doesn't speak as she thinks. You won't much depend upon her if you'll believe me.

Eliza. Fie! what a wicked creature are you to make the lady suspect me! Consider a little what condition I should be in should she believe what you say. Am I so far unhappy, madam, that you should entertain this thought of me?

Climene. No, no, I don't mind her words, I think you more sincere than she says.

Eliza. Oh! you are infinitely in the right, madam; and you do me justice when you believe I think you the most engaging person in the world; that I enter into all your sentiments, and am charmed with every expression you utter.

Climene. Alas! I speak without affectation.

Eliza. One sees it, madam, very plainly, and that everything is natural in you. Your words, the tone of your voice, your looks, your gait, your action and your dress, have a *je ne sçay quoi* of quality in 'em that enchant people. I study you by my eyes, by my ears; and I am so full of you, that I strive to ape you and counterfeit you in everything.

Climene. You're pleased to banter me, madam.

Eliza. Pardon me, madam; who could banter you?

Climene. I am no good model, madam.

Eliza. Oh! yes, madam.

Climene. You flatter me, madam.

Eliza. Not at all, madam.

Climene. Have a little mercy on me, madam, if you please.

Eliza. I have so much mercy on you, that I don't say half of what I think of you.

Climene. Oh heavens! Let us drop it, pray. You'd throw me into a horrible confusion. [To *Urania.*] You see in short, madam, we are both against you, and obstinacy fits so ill upon your people of wit——

SCENE IV

The Marquis, Climene, Galopin, Urania, Eliza.

Galopin. [At the chamber door.] Hold, sir, if you please.

Marquis. Certainly thou dost not know me.

Galopin. Yea, I do know you, but you shan't go in.

Marquis. Hey, what a bustle is here, ye little skip-jack.

Galopin. It isn't fair to endeavour to get in, in spite of people's teeth.

Marquis. I will see thy mistress.

Galopin. She's not at home, I tell you.

Marquis. Why there she is, in her chamber.

Galopin. That's true, she is there; but she's not at home for all that.

Urania. What's the meaning of this? What's the matter there?

Marquis. 'Tis your lackey, madam, who's playing the fool.

Galopin. I tell him, madam, you are not at home, and still he'll needs come in.

Urania. And why did you tell the gentleman that I'm not at home?

Galopin. You scolded me t'other day for telling him you were at home.

Urania. See the insolence of this knave! Pray, sir, don't believe what he says; 'tis a little giddy-brained mortal, and he takes you for another person.

Marquis. I saw it plainly, madam, and had it not been in respect to you, I should ha' taught him to know people of quality.

Eliza. My cousin is much obliged to you for this deference.

Urania. [To *Galopin.*] A chair there, Impertinence.

Galopin. Isn't there one?

Urania. Bring it hither.

[*Galopin pushes the chair rudely, and goes out.*

SCENE V

The Marquis, Climene, Urania, Eliza.

Marquis. Your boy, madam, has a contempt for my person.

Eliza. He would be much to blame, certainly.

Marquis. 'Tis perhaps because I pay interest for my ill looks. [Laughs.] He, he, he, he!

Eliza. Age will make him better acquainted with people of fashion.

Marquis. What were you upon, ladies, when I interrupted you?

Urania. Upon the play of *The School for Wives*.

Marquis. I'm but just come from it.

Climene. Well, sir, what d'ye think of it pray?

Marquis. Absolutely silly.

Climene. Oh! how glad am I of that!

Marquis. The most villainous thing in the world. What

the deuce! I could scarce get a place. I thought I should have been stifled at the door, and never was I so trampled upon. See, pray, what a condition my rollers and ribbons are in.

Eliza. Very true, this cries vengeance against *The School for Wives*, and you justly condemn it.

Marquis. I think there never was so wretched a play made.

Urania. Hoh! here's Dorantes, that we were expecting.

SCENE VI

Dorantes, the Marquis, Climene, Eliza, Urania.

Dorantes. Pray don't stir, and don't break off your discourse. You are upon a subject there which for this four days makes the conversation of almost every house in Paris; and never was anything more diverting than the different judgments that are passed upon it. For in short, I have heard this play condemned by some people for the very things that I found others esteemed it most for.

Urania. Here's the marquis speaks very ill of it.

Marquis. 'Tis true. I think it detestable, egad; detestable to the last degree of detestable; what one may call detestable.

Dorantes. And I, my dear marquis, think the opinion detestable.

Marquis. How, knight, d'ye pretend to vindicate this piece?

Dorantes. Yes, I do pretend to vindicate it.

Marquis. Egad, I warrant it detestable.

Dorantes. That warrant is not city security. But, marquis, pray for what reason is this play what you say it is?

Marquis. Why is it detestable?

Dorantes. Yes.

Marquis. 'Tis detestable, because it is detestable,

Dorantes. There's not a word to say after this; the cause is ended. But yet inform us, and tell us what faults it has.

Marquis. What do I know? I didn't so much as give myself the trouble to hear it. But in short, I know I never saw anything so villainous, as I hope for mercy; and Dorilas, who sat opposite to me, was of my opinion.

Dorantes. The authority is good, thou'rt well supported.

Marquis. One needs only observe the perpetual loud laughs set up in the pit. I want nothing else to prove 'tis good for nothing.

Dorantes. Then, marquis, you are one of those fine gentlemen who won't allow the pit to have common sense, and who

would be grieved to laugh along with that, though 'twere at the best thing in the world? I saw t'other day one of our friends upon the stage, who made himself ridiculous by this. He heard the whole piece with the most gloomy gravity in the world; and everything that made others merry, made him frown. At every loud laugh he shrugged his shoulders, and looked with pity upon the pit; and sometimes again looking down with vexation, he cried out aloud, Laugh then, pit, laugh. Our friend's chagrin was a second comedy; he showed away like a generous fellow to the whole assembly, and everybody allowed no man could play his part better than he did. Learn, marquis, you and others with you, that good sense has no determined place at a play; that the difference betwixt half a guinea and half a crown makes nothing at all to a good taste; and whether one stand, or sit, one may pass a bad judgment; and that, in short, to take it in general, I should depend a good deal upon the approbation of the pit, because among those who compose it, there are many who are capable of judging of a piece according to rules, and because others judge by a proper method of judging, which is to be guided by things, and not to have any blind prejudice nor affected complaisance, nor ridiculous delicacy.

Marquis. So, knight, thou'rt a defender of the pit, art? Egad, I'm glad on't, and I shall not fail to acquaint it thou'rt one of its friends. Ha, ha, ha, ha, he!

Dorantes. Laugh as much as you will, I am for good sense, and can't endure those ebullitions of the brain in our *toupet* marquises. It makes me mad to see people make fools of themselves in spite of their quality; your folks who are always decisive, and speak boldly of everything without knowing a word o' th' matter; who shall clap ye all the bad parts of a play, and not so much as stir at those that are good; who upon viewing a picture, or hearing a concert of music, both blame and praise everything by rule of contraries; who pick up terms of art wherever they can, which they get by heart, and never fail to disjoint 'em, and put 'em out of their place. S'death, gentlemen, be silent. Since Heaven has not blessed you with the knowledge of one earthly thing, don't make yourselves a laughing stock to those who hear you; and consider that by saying never a word, you may perhaps be thought clever fellows.

Marquis. Egad, knight, thou carriest this matter—

Dorantes. Why, marquis, I don't speak to you; 'tis to a dozen of those gentry who disgrace the courtiers by their extravagant manners, and make the people believe we are all

alike. For my part, I'll justify myself from it to the utmost of my power, and I'll so rally 'em wherever I meet 'em, that at last they shall grow wise.

Marquis. Prithee tell me, knight, dost think Lysander has wit?

Dorantes. Yes, doubtless, and a good deal.

Urania. That's what nobody can deny him.

Marquis. Ask him what he thinks of *The School for Wives* you'll see he'll tell you 'tis not to his taste.

Dorantes. Lack-a-day! there are a good many people who are spoiled by too much wit, who see things imperfectly by strength of light, and who would even be sorry to be of other folks' opinion that they may have the glory of deciding.

Urania. 'Tis true. Our friend is doubtless one of those people. He must be the first of his opinion, and have others wait through respect to his judgment: every one's approbation that gets the start of his is an outrage upon his understanding, which he highly revenges by taking the opposite party. He would have folks consult him in all affairs of wit; and I'm certain had the author shown him his play before he exhibited it to the public, he would have thought it the finest in the world.

Marquis. And what say ye of the Marchioness Araminta, who publishes it about town for a dreadful one, and says she could never endure the ordure it is full of?

Dorantes. I shall say she deserves the character she has assumed, and that there are persons who make themselves ridiculous for affecting too much honour. Though she has wit, she has followed the ill example of those, who, being upon the decline of age, want to make amends for what they see they've lost, and imagine the grimace of a scrupulous prudery will supply the place of youth and beauty. This same lady carries the affair farther than anybody; the ingenuousness of her scruple discovers obscenity where no person would ever have seen it. They tell ye that these scruples proceed so far as even to disfigure our language, and that there are scarce any words in it which the severity of this lady won't retrench either the head or the tail, on account of the immodest syllables she finds in 'em.

Urania. You are a very wag, knight.

Marquis. In short, knight, you think to defend your play by satirising those who condemn it?

Dorantes. Not at all; but I think that this lady is unjustly scandalised—

Eliza. Not too fast, Sir Knight; there may be other ladies besides her who may be of the same sentiments.

Dorantes. I know 'tis not you at least, and that when you saw this performance—

Eliza. 'Tis true, but I have changed my opinion, and this lady [*Pointing to Climene.*] supports hers by such convincing reasons, that she has carried me quite on her side.

Dorantes. [*To Climene.*] Oh! madam, I ask pardon; and, if you will, I'll unsay, for love of you, all that I have said.

Climene. I won't have it to be for love of me, but for the love of reason; for in short that piece, to take it right, is absolutely indefensible; and I don't conceive—

Urania. Hoh! Herc's the author, Mr. Lysidas; he comes apropos, for this affair. Mr. Lysidas, take your chair and sit down there.

SCENE VII

Lysidas, Climene, Urania, Eliza, Dorantes, the Marquis.

Lysidas. Madam, I come something of the latest; but I was obliged to read my piece to my lady marchioness I was speaking of to you, and the praises given it have kept me an hour longer than I thought of.

Eliza. Praise is a powerful charm to detain an author.

Urania. Sit down then, Mr. Lysidas, we shall read your piece after supper.

Lysidas. All they who were there are to come the first night, and have promised me to do their duty as they should do.

Urania. I believe it; but, pray once more please to sit down. We are upon an affair here which I should be very glad to go on with.

Lysidas. I hope, madam, you will take a box too for that day.

Urania. We shall see. Pray let's go on with our discourse.

Lysidas. I give you warning, madam, that they are almost all taken.

Urania. 'Tis mighty well. In short I wanted you when you came, and all the world was against me here.

Eliza. [*To Urania, and pointing to Dorantes.*] He was on your side at first; but now he knows the lady is at the head of the contrary party, I fancy you have nothing to do but seek out for other assistance.

Climene. No, no, I would not have him neglect his court to miss your cousin, I allow his wit to be on the side of his heart.

Dorantes. With this permission, madam, I shall presume to defend myself.

Urania. But first, pray let us know a little the sentiments of Mr. Lysidas.

Lysidas. Upon what, madam?

Urania. Upon the subject of *The School for Wives*.

Lysidas. Ha, ha!

Dorantes. What think you of it?

Lysidas. I've nothing to say upon that head; and you know that amongst us authors we ought to speak of each other's works with a great deal of circumspection.

Dorantes. But pray, between us, what do you think of this play?

Lysidas. I, sir?

Urania. Tell us your opinion, honestly.

Lysidas. I think it very pretty.

Dorantes. Really?

Lysidas. Really; why not? Is it not indeed a very fine one?

Dorantes. Um, um, you are a wicked spark, Mr. Lysidas; you don't speak as you think.

Lysidas. Pardon me.

Dorantes. Lack-a-day, I know you; don't dissemble.

Lysidas. I, sir?

Dorantes. I see plainly that you speak well of this piece only out of modesty; and that at the bottom of your heart you are of the opinion of a great many people, who think it bad.

Lysidas. Ha, ha, ha!

Dorantes. Nay, confess that this comedy is a villainous thing.

Lysidas. 'Tis true, it is not approved by your connoisseurs.

Marquis. Faith, knight, thou hast it, thou art paid for thy raillery. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Dorantes. Laugh on, my dear marquis, laugh on.

Marquis. You see we have the learned on our side.

Dorantes. 'Tis true, Mr. Lysidas's judgment is something considerable, but Mr. Lysidas will excuse me if I don't yield for all this; and since I have presumed to defend myself against the lady's sentiments, he won't take it ill if I oppose his.

Eliza. What, when you see the lady, my lord marquis, and Mr. Lysidas against you, dare you resist still? Fie, that's acting with a bad grace.

Climene. For my part, what confounds me is, that people of sense can take it into their heads to give protection to the stupidity of this piece.

Marquis. Demme, madam, 'tis miserable from beginning to end.

Dorantes. That's soon said, marquis, there's nothing more easy than to cut the matter short thus, and I don't see anything can stand against the sovereignty of thy decisions.

Marquis. S'life, all the other comedians who were to see it, said all the ill things of it possible.

Dorantes. Oh! I say not a word more, you're absolutely right, marquis, since all the other comedians speak ill of it, we must certainly believe 'em. They are all discerning people, and speak without interest; there's no more to be said, I yield.

Climene. Yield, or not yield, I know very well you shall never persuade me to endure the immodesty of this piece; no more than you shall the disobliging satire in it against the ladies.

Urania. For my part, I shall take care not to be offended at it, and to take nothing to my own account that's said in it. This sort of satire falls directly upon the manners, and hits the persons only by rebound. Let us not apply to ourselves the strokes of a general censure; let us profit by the lesson, if we can, without making as if they spoke to us. All the ridiculous paintings that are drawn upon the stage should be viewed without uneasiness by all the world. They are public mirrors, where we are never to declare that we see ourselves; and 'tis downright to tax ourselves with a crime, to be scandalised at a reproof.

Climene. As to myself, I don't speak of these things in regard to any part I can have in 'em; and I think I live in the world after such a manner as not to fear being looked for among the paintings drawn for disorderly women.

Eliza. Certainly, madam, one will never look for you there; your conduct is known sufficiently, and is one of those things that nobody calls in question.

Urania. [To *Climene.*] Therefore, madam, I said nothing that can reach you, and my words, like the satire in comedy, rest in general positions.

Climene. I don't doubt it, madam. But however let us pass this point over. I don't know how you'll receive the reflections thrown on our sex in a certain part of the piece; and for my part, I own to you, I'm in a horrible passion to see this impertinent author call us animals.

Urania. Don't you see 'tis a ridiculous character he makes speak it?

Dorantes. And then, madam, don't you know that the

reproaches of lovers never give scandal? that 'tis much the same with furious as with fondling lovers, and that on such occasions the strangest words, and even something still worse, are taken very often as marks of affection by the very persons who receive them.

Eliza. Say what you will I can't digest this no more than the porridge and cream-tart the lady was speaking of just now.

Marquis. O! yes, faith, cream-tart; that's what I was observing a while ago; cream-tart! How am I obliged to you, madam, for having reminded me of cream-tart! Are there apples enough in Normandy for cream-tart? Cream-tart, egad, cream-tart!

Dorantes. Well, what mean ye with your cream-tart?

Marquis. S'life, cream-tart, knight!

Dorantes. But what?

Marquis. Cream-tart!

Dorantes. Tell us your reasons a little.

Marquis. Cream-tart!

Urania. But you should explain your meaning, methinks.

Marquis. Cream-tart, madam!

Urania. What find you to object against?

Marquis. I? Nothing. Cream-tart!

Urania. Oh! I give it up.

Eliza. My lord marquis goes the right way to work, and plays ye off finely. But I wish Mr. Lysidas would finish, and give 'em a little touch or two in his manner.

Lysidas. 'Tis not my custom to find fault with anything, I am very favourable to other people's works. But in short, no offence to the friendship the knight declares for the author, you must own to me these sort of plays are not properly plays, and that there is a great deal of difference between all these trifles, compared with the beauty of serious pieces. Yet all the world gives in to it nowadays; there's no thronging after anything but this; and you see nothing but a frightful solitude at the grand works, when these silly things shall have all Paris after 'em. I own to you my heart sometimes bleeds at it, and 'tis a scandal to all France.

Climene. 'Tis true, people's taste is strangely corrupted in this point, and the age vulgarises furiously.

Eliza. In short that's pretty, vulgarises! was it you invented that, madam?

Climene. Ah!

Eliza. I'm much in doubt about it.

Dorantes. You think then, Mr. Lysidas, that all the wit and all the beauty lie in serious poems? and that comic pieces are trifles which merit no praise?

Urania. For my part, that's not my sentiment. Tragedy, without doubt, is something fine when 'tis well touched; but comedy has its charms, and I think one is not less difficult than the other.

Dorantes. Certainly, madam; and for the difficulty, should you place it more on the side of comedy, perhaps you would not be in the wrong. For in short, I think it much easier to soar upon grand sentiments, to brave fortune in verse, to accuse the destinies, and reproach the gods, than to enter, as one should do, into the ridicule of men, and to make the faults of all mankind appear agreeable on the stage. When you paint heroes you do what you have a mind, these are portraits drawn at pleasure, where we seek not for resemblance; you have only to follow the traces of an imagination that soars aloft, and often forsakes the true to hit the marvellous. But when you paint men, you must paint after nature. People expect resemblance in these portraits; you have done nothing if you don't display the people of the age so as to make 'em known. In a word, in serious pieces 'tis sufficient to escape censure to say things that are good sense, and well written. But this is not sufficient in the others; you must be merry, and 'tis a strange enterprise to make your better sort o' people laugh.

Climene. I think myself in the number of the better sort of people, and yet I did not find one word to laugh at in all I saw of it.

Marquis. Faith, nor I neither.

Dorantes. As for you, marquis, I am not astonished at it, 'tis because you found no puns in it.

Lysidas. Faith, sir, what we meet with there is not much better, and in my opinion all the raillery that's in it is very insipid.

Dorantes. The court thought not so-

Lysidas. Oh! the court, sir?

Dorantes. Speak out, Mr. Lysidas. I see plainly you mean that the court is no judge in these matters; and this is the usual refuge of you gentlemen authors, in the bad success of your works, to accuse only the injustice of the age, and the want of discernment in courtiers. Please to know, Mr. Lysidas, that courtiers have as good eyes as other people; that folks may be ingenious with a Venice point and a feather, as well as with a

bob-peruke, and a short round cravat; that the grand test of all your plays is the court; that you must study its taste to find the art of succeeding; there is no place where the decisions are so just; and without bringing into the account all the men of learning there, one forms a manner of genius there only by plain, natural, good sense, and conversation with the beau-monde, which, without comparison, judges more delicately of things, than all the commonplace learning of pedants.

Urania. 'Tis true that if you stay but ever so little while there, things enough pass daily before your eyes to acquire a habit of knowing 'em; and above all, whatever belongs to good or bad raillery.

Dorantes. The court, I grant, has some ridiculous people about it, and I am the first, as you may see, to banter 'em. But, faith, there are a great number too amongst the wits by profession; and if we ridicule some marquises, I think there are a good many more authors to ridicule; and what a droll thing 'twould be to bring 'em upon the stage, with their learned grimaces, and their ridiculous refinements; their vicious custom of assassinating people in their works; their greediness of praise; their sparingness of thought; their traffic of reputation; and their lines offensive and defensive; as also their learned wars and combats in prose and verse.

Lysidas. Molière, sir, is very happy in having so warm a patron as you are. But however, to come to fact, the question in debate is, Whether his piece be good; and here I engage myself to show there are in the whole a hundred visible faults.

Urania. 'Tis a strange thing of you gentlemen poets, that you should always condemn the pieces all the world runs after, and never speak well but of those that nobody goes to. You show an invincible hatred for the one, and an inconceivable tenderness for the other.

Dorantes. That's because 'tis generous to be on the side of the afflicted.

Urania. But pray, Mr. Lysidas, let us see some of these faults that I perceived nothing of.

Lysidas. They who are masters of Aristotle and Horace see immediately, madam, that this comedy offends against all the rules of art.

Urania. I confess I've no intimacy with these gentlemen, and that I don't know the rules of art.

Dorantes. You are very merry fellows with your rules, that you puzzle the ignorant and din us in the head with daily.

One would think, to hear you talk, that these rules of art were the greatest mysteries in the world; and yet they are nothing but some easy observations, which good sense has made upon what may take away the pleasure one finds in these sort of poems; and the same good sense which made these observations formerly, easily makes 'em at all times, without the help of Horace and Aristotle. I would be glad to know whether the grand rule of all rules is not to please; and whether a piece upon the stage that has gained its end, did not take a right way? Would you have it that the whole public is mistaken in these matters, and that every one should not be a judge of the pleasure he takes in 'em?

Urania. I have observed one thing in these gentlemen; 'tis that those who talk most of rules, and know 'em better than others, make plays which nobody thinks good.

Dorantes. And this, madam, is what shows what little regard ought to be had to their puzzling rules. For in short, if pieces which are according to rule do not please, and those that please are not according to rule, the rules must of necessity have been made wrong. Let us therefore despite this chicanery to which they would subject the public taste, and never consult anything in a play but the effect it has on us. Let us heartily follow the things that take our fancy, and never hunt for reasons to prevent our having pleasure.

Urania. For my part, when I see a play, I only mind whether things touch me; and when I am well diverted by it, I don't inquire whether I was in the wrong, and whether the rules of Aristotle forbade me to laugh.

Dorantes. 'Tis exactly like a man who should have found an excellent sauce, and should examine whether 'twere good by the rules of a French cook.

Urania. Very true; and I admire at the refinements of certain people in matters wherein we ought to follow our own sense.

Dorantes. You are right, madam, to think all these mysterious refinements impertinent. For in short if they take place, we are reduced no longer to believe ourselves; our own senses must be slaves in everything; and even in eating and drinking we must not dare any longer to think anything good, without leave from these gentlemen adepts.

Lysidas. In short, sir, your whole reason is, that *The School for Wives* has pleased; and you should not at all care whether 'twere done by rule, provided—

Dorantes. Softly, Mr. Lysidas, I don't grant ye that. I say plainly the great art is to please, and that this comedy having pleased those it was made for, I think it sufficient for it, and that there is no reason to mind the rest. But withal, I maintain it does not offend against any of the rules you speak of. I have read 'em, thank my stars, as well as other people, and I could easily make it appear that we have not, perhaps, a piece on the stage more regular than this.

Eliza. Courage, Mr. Lysidas, we are undone if you give way.

Lysidas. How, sir, the protasis, the epitasis, and the peripetie—

Dorantes. Nay, Mr. Lysidas, you knock us down with your hard words. Pray don't seem so learned. Civilise your discourse a little, and speak to be understood. D'ye think that a Greek name gives greater force to your reasons? should you not think full out as pretty to say the exposition of the subject, as the protasis; the plot, as the epitasis, and the unravelling, as the peripetie?

Lysidas. These are terms of art, that we are allowed to make use of. But since these words offend your ears, I shall explain myself in another way; and I desire you would answer me positively to three or four things I am going to say. Can one endure a piece which offends against the proper name of theatrical pieces? For after all, the name of dramatic poem comes from a Greek word, which signifies to act, to show that the nature of this poem consists in action; and in this comedy there are no actions pass, and all consist in recitals made by Agnes or by Horace.

Marquis. Hah! hah! knight!

Climene. Ingeniously remarked, this is coming to the nicest point of things.

Lysidas. Can anything be less witty, or to speak more properly, more low, than some words which all the world laughed at, and especially that of *Children by the ear*?

Climene. Very well.

Eliza. Oh!

Lysidas. Is not the scene of the footman and the maid within doors, of a tedious length, and absolutely impertinent?

Marquis. True.

Climene. Certainly.

Eliza. He's in the right.

Lysidas. Does not Arnolph give his money too freely to Horace? And since 'tis the ridiculous character of the

piece, should he have made him do the action of a worthy man?

Marquis. Good. The remark is good again.

Climene. Admirable!

Eliza. Marvellous!

Lysidas. Are not the sermon and the maxims ridiculous things, and what strike at the respect due to our religion?

Marquis. Well said.

Climene. Spoke as it ought to be.

Eliza. Nothing can be better.

Lysidas. And that in short Mr. La Souche, who is made a man of wit, and who appears so serious in so many passages, doesn't he descend to something too comical, and too extravagant in the fifth act, when he sets forth the violence of his love to Agnes, with that wild rolling of his eyes, with those ridiculous sighs, and those foolish tears, which set all the world a-laughing?

Marquis. Wonderful, egad!

Climene. Miraculous!

Eliza. Vivat Mr. Lysidas.

Lysidas. I pass over a hundred thousand other things for fear of being tedious.

Marquis. Faith, knight, thou'rt but in an ill taking.

Dorantes. We shall see.

Marquis. Thou hast met with thy man.

Dorantes. Perhaps so.

Marquis. Answer, answer, answer, answer.

Dorantes. Very willingly. 'Tis—

Marquis. Answer then, prithee.

Dorantes. Permit me then. If—

Marquis. Egad, I defy thee to answer.

Dorantes. Yes, if you talk for ever.

Climene. Pray, let us hear his reasons.

Dorantes. First of all, 'tis not true, to say that the whole piece consists only of narration. One sees a good deal of action in it, which passes upon the stage; and the narrations themselves are of actions according to the constitution of the subject; inasmuch as these narrations are all innocently related to an interested person, who by this means is at every turn thrown into a confusion, which diverts the spectators, and takes all the measures he can, upon each information, to ward off the mischief he fears.

Urania. For my part, I think the beauty of the subject of *The School for Wives* consists in this continued confidence; and

what appears diverting enough to me, is that a man who has sense, and who is warned of everything by an innocent creature who is his mistress, and a mar-plot who is his rival, cannot with all this escape what happens to him.

Marquis. Trifles, trifles.

Climene. A weak answer.

Eliza. Pitiful reasons.

Dorantes. As to what regards the *Children by the ear*, it has no jest in it but in regard to Arnolph; and the author did not insert this as a jest of itself; but only for a thing which characterises the man, and paints his extravagance so much the better, since he repeats a trivial, foolish thing that Agnes had said, as the finest thing in the world, and what gives him an inconceivable joy.

Marquis. Wretchedly answered.

Climene. 'Tis not satisfactory.

Eliza. 'Tis saying nothing.

Dorantes. As to the money he gives so liberally, besides that the letter of his very good friend is a sufficient security to him, 'tis by no means incompatible that a man should be ridiculous in certain things, and a worthy man in others. And for the scene of Allen and Georgetta within doors, which some people have thought long and insipid, 'tis certain 'tis not without its reasons; and in the same way that Arnolph is caught during his journey, by the pure innocence of his mistress, he waits a long while at his door upon his return, by the innocence of his servants, that he might be punished throughout, by the very things which he thought to secure his precautions by.

Marquis. These reasons are good for nothing.

Climene. This is all ineffectual.

Eliza. 'Tis pitiful.

Dorantes. As to the moral discourse, which you call a sermon, 'tis certain your truly religious people who heard it, saw nothing that struck at what you mentioned; and without doubt those words of hell, and boiling cauldrons are justified by the extravagance of Arnolph, and by the innocence of her he speaks to. And as to the amorous transports of the fifth act, which you accuse as too extravagant and burlesque, I would be glad to know whether this is not a satire upon lovers, and whether even sober people, and the most serious upon the like occasions, don't do things—

Marquis. Faith, knight, thou wouldest do better to hold thy tongue.

Dorantes. Very well. But in short, if we were to mind ourselves when we are very amorous—

Marquis. I won't so much as hear you.

Dorantes. Hear me if you please. Don't we in the violence of the passion—

Marquis. Tol, lol, lol, lol, de rol, tol, lol, lol, lol, de rol.

[*Sings.*]

Dorantes. What—

Marquis. Tol, lol, lol, lol, de rol, tol, lol, lol, de rol.

Dorantes. I don't know if—

Marquis. Tol, lol, lol, lol, de rol, tol, lol, lol, lol, de rol.

Urания. I think that—

Marquis. La, la, la, lare, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.

Urания. There are a good many merry things pass in our dispute. I fancy one might very well make a little comedy out of 'em, and that this would not do ill at the end of *The School for Wives*.

Dorantes. You're in the right.

Marquis. Egad, knight, thou wouldest play a part in it not at all to thy advantage.

Dorantes. 'Tis true, marquis.

Climene. For my part, I could wish 'twere done, provided they'd treat the affair just as it has passed.

Eliza. And I'd furnish 'em with my character, with all my heart.

Lysidas. I think I should not refuse 'em mine.

Urания. Since everybody would be satisfied, knight, take notes of it, and give it to Molière whom you know, to work it up into a play.

Climene. He would not care for it, without doubt it would be no panegyric upon him.

Urания. No, no, I know his humour; he does not care if they laugh at his pieces, provided people do but flock to 'em.

Dorantes. Yes, but what unravelling can we find for this plot? For here can be neither marriage, nor discovery; and I don't see how we can end this dispute.

Urания. We must think of some incident for that.

SCENE VIII

Climene, Urania, Eliza, Dorantes, the Marquis, Lysidas, Galopin.

Galopin. Madam, supper's upon table.

Dorantes. Hah! this is exactly what we wanted for the unravelling our plot, and there's nothing can be thought of more natural. They shall dispute strong and firm on one side and t'other as we have done, without anybody's yielding; a boy shall come and tell 'em that the dishes are served up, they rise and every one goes to supper.

Urania. The play can't end better, and we shall do well to stop here.

THE IMPROMPTU OF VERSAILLES
(A COMEDY)

**THE IMPROMPTU OF VERSAILLES, a Comedy of One Act in Prose, acted
at Versailles in October, 1663, and at Paris at the Theatre of the
Palace-Royal the 4th of November, the same year.**

Molière, deeply affected with the king's kindness to him, of which he had just received new marks, thought that he ought in his presence, and before the whole court, to destroy the suspicion of his having drawn the characters of particular persons in *The School for Wives*, which might have proved disadvantageous to him; and for this purpose brought on *The Impromptu of Versailles*. In this piece Boursault is far from being spared, and is named with the utmost contempt; but this contempt affected only his genius and talents; he had attacked Molière in a more sensible part. If the writings of Molière were very ancient we should have thought it a curiosity that we find in this piece the time of his marriage with the daughter of the comedian Béjart. (*Impromptu of Versailles*, scene i.)

Molière. Hold your peace, wife, you're an ass.

Mrs. Molière. Thank you, good husband. See how it is; matrimony alters people strangely; you would not have said this a year and a half ago.

ACTORS

MOLIÈRE, *a ridiculous marquis.*

BRÉCOURT, *a man of quality.*

LA GRANGE, *a ridiculous marquis.*

DU CROISY, *a poet.*

MRS. DU PARC, *a ceremonious marchioness.*

MRS. BÉJART, *a prude.*

MRS. DE BRIE, *a sage coquette.*

MRS. MOLIÈRE, *a satirical wit.*

MRS. DU CROISY, *a whining gipsy.*

MRS. HERVEY, *a conceited chamber-maid.*

TORRILLIÈRE, *an impertinent marquis.*

BÉJART, *a busybody.*

FOUR ATTENDANTS

SCENE: *Versailles, in the king's antechamber.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Molière, Brécourt, La Grange, Du Croisy, Mrs. Du Parc, Mrs. Bijart, Mrs. Du Brie, Mrs. Molière, Mrs. Du Croisy, Mrs. Hervey.

Molière. [Alone, talking to the players who are behind the scenes.] Come gentlemen and ladies, are you in jest, delaying thus, and won't you come hither? Plague take the people! Soho, Mr. Brécourt.

Brécourt. [Behind the scenes.] What?

Molière. Mr. La Grange.

La Grange. What now?

Molière. Mr. Du Croisy.

Du Croisy. What do you want?

Molière. Mrs. Du Parc.

Mrs. Du Parc. Well?

Molière. Mrs. Bejart.

Mrs. Bijart. Who's there?

Molière. Mrs. De Brie.

Mrs. De Brie. What would you have?

Molière. Mrs. Du Croisy.

Mrs. Du Croisy. What's the matter?

Molière. Mrs. Hervey.

Mrs. Hervey. Here.

Molière. I believe I shall go distracted with all these people here. Harkee! [Enter Brécourt, La Grange, Du Croisy.] S'death, gentlemen, will you make me mad to-day?

Brécourt. What would you have us do? We don't know our parts, and you'll make us mad to oblige us to play in this manner.

Molière. Oh, what strange animals to be governed are actors!

[Enter Mrs. Bijart, Du Parc, De Brie, Molière, Du Croisy, and Hervey.]

Mrs. Bijart. Well, we are here; what d'ye intend to do?

Mrs. Du Parc. What's your meaning?

Mrs. De Brie. What's to be done?

Molière. Pray let us stay here, and since we are all dressed, and the king does not come these two hours, let us employ

that time to rehearse our thing, and see in what manner we must play our parts.

La Grange. How shall we play what we don't know?

Mrs. Du Parc. As for me, I declare t'ye I don't remember one word of my part.

Mrs. De Brie. I know very well that I must be prompted from one end to the other.

Mrs. Béjart. And I prepare to hold my part in my hand.

Mrs. Molière. And I too.

Mrs. Hervey. For my part I have no great matter to say.

Mrs. Du Croisy. Nor I neither, but for all that I won't answer for it that I shan't be out.

Du Croisy. I wish I could be quit on't for ten pistoles.

Brécourt. And I for twenty good strokes of a cudgel, I assure you.

Molière. You are all mighty sick in having a difficult part to play; what would you do if you were in my place?

Mrs. Béjart. Who you? you have no cause to complain, for as you wrote the piece you need not fear being out.

Molière. And have I nothing to fear but want of memory? Do you reckon the anxiousness of success which regards me alone, nothing? And do you think it a small matter to expose a comic performance before such an assembly as this is? To undertake to make persons laugh who strike us with respect, and never laugh but when they please? Is there any author but what ought to tremble when he comes to this trial? And have not I reason to say that I would give everything in the world to be quit of it.

Mrs. Béjart. If that makes you tremble, you'd be more cautious, and would not have undertaken in eight days what you have done.

Molière. How could I refuse it when commanded by a king to do it?

Mrs. Béjart. How? By a respectful excuse founded upon the impossibility of the thing in the little time that was given you. Anybody else in your place would have managed his reputation better, and taken care not to expose himself as you do. What will become of you, pray, if the thing doesn't succeed? and what an advantage, think you, all your enemies will make on't.

Mrs. De Brie. Indeed you should have excused yourself, with respect, to the king, or required more time.

Molière. Oh, madam, kings love nothing so much as a ready

obedience, and are not at all pleased by meeting with obstacles. Things are not good but just when they desire them; and endeavouring to defer their diversion is, with them, taking away all the agreeableness of it. They'd have pleasures that may not make them wait, and the less prepared the more agreeable they are always to them. We ought never to regard ourselves in what they require of us, our only business is to please them, and when they command us anything 'tis our business to take advantage immediately of their desire. We had better acquit ourselves ill of what they require of us than not to acquit ourselves of it soon enough; and if we have the shame of not succeeding, we have always the glory of having speedily obeyed their commands. But pray let us set about our rehearsal.

Mrs. Béjart. How d'ye intend we shall do, if we don't know our parts?

Molière. You shall know 'em, I tell you; and if you even should not know 'em perfectly, could not you supply 'em with your own wit, since 'tis prose, and you know the subject.

Mrs. Béjart. Your servant. Prose is still worse than verse.

Mrs. Molière. Give me leave to tell you, you ought to have made a comedy where you might have played by yourself.

Molière. Hold your peace, wife, you are an ass.

Mrs. Molière. Thank you, good husband. See how it is; matrimony alters people strangely; you would not have said this a year and a half ago.

Molière. Pray hold your tongue.

Mrs. Molière. 'Tis a strange thing that a little ceremony should be capable of depriving us of all our good qualities; and that a husband and a gallant should look upon the same person with such different eyes.

Molière. What a prating is here!

Mrs. Molière. I'faith if I were to write a comedy I would write it on this subject. I would justify the women in a great many things they are accused of, and I'd make the husbands dread the difference there is between their rough manners and the civility of gallants.

Molière. Well, let that alone, we are not to prattle now, we have something else to do.

Mrs. Béjart. But since you were commanded to work on the subject of the criticism that's made upon you, why did not you make that comedy of comedians that you have talked to us of a long time? 'twas a thing ready invented, and would have come very proper, and so much the better, as having undertaken

to paint you, they opened an occasion to you to paint them likewise, and it might have been called their picture much more justly than all they have done can be called yours; for to mimic a comedian in a comic part is not to describe him, but 'tis only describing after him the characters he represents, and making use of the same strokes, and the same colours which he's obliged to use in the different pictures of the ridiculous characters, which he imitates after nature. But to mimic a comedian in serious parts is describing him by faults which are entirely his own, since those kind of characters will not bear either the gestures or ridiculous tone of voice by which he is known again.

Molière. 'Tis true, but I have my reasons for not doing it; I did not think, between us, the thing worth the trouble, and besides it required more time to execute that idea. As their days of playing are the same with ours, I have scarce been to see them above three or four times since we have been at Paris; I caught nothing of their manner of acting but what at first was obvious to the eye, and I should want to study them more to make portraits very like them.

Mrs. Du Parc. For my part, I have discovered some resemblances of 'em come from your mouth.

Mrs. De Brie. I never heard this talked of.

Molière. 'Tis a thought I once had in my head, but I have left it as a trifle, an impertinent thing, that perhaps would not have made people laugh.

Mrs. De Brie. Tell it me a little, since you have told it others.

Molière. We haven't time now.

Mrs. De Brie. Only in two words.

Molière. I had thoughts of a comedy in which there should have been a poet whom I would have represented myself, who should come to offer a piece to a company of comedians newly come out of the country. Have you actors and actresses, he should have said, that are capable of setting off a performance well, for my piece is a piece.—Ah! sir, the comedian should have answered, we have men and women who have been thought tolerable in all places we have passed through. And who plays the king amongst you? There's an actor who performs it sometimes. Who! that fine-shaped young man? You jest sure! You should have a king that's very fat, and four-square. S'death, a king that's stuffed as he should be. A king of a vast circumference, and that can fill a throne handsomely. A fine-shaped king is a fine thing indeed! This is one grand fault already; but let me hear him repeat a dozen verses a little. Upon which

the comedian should have repeated, for example, some verses of the King, in *Nicomedes*,

I say, Araspus, he has too well served me,
My power augmenting—

the most naturally that he possibly could. Then the poet: What, do you call that repeating? you rally sure; you should speak things with an emphasis. Hearken to me.

[*Imitating Monfleury, an excellent actor of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.*

I say, Araspus—

Do you see this posture? Observe that well. There, lay a stress as you ought on the last verse; that's what gains approbation, and raises a clap. But, sir, the comedian should have answered, Methinks a king who is discoursing alone with the captain of his guards, speaks a little more humanely, and scarce makes use of this demoniacal tone. You don't understand it. Go and speak as you do, you'll see if you'll get one clap. Ah, let's see a little a scene of a lover and his mistress. Upon which an actor and actress should have played a scene together, which is that of Camilla and Curiatius,

Dost go, dear soul, and does this fatal honour
Please thee at the expense of all our welfare?
Alas! I too well see,—

like the other, and as naturally as he was able. Then the poet immediately: You are in jest, you do nothing to the purpose, thus you ought to repeat this:

[*Imitating Mrs. Beauchateau, a player of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.*

Dost go, dear soul,—
No, I know thee better,

Do you see how natural and passionate this is? Admire this smiling countenance which she preserves in the greatest afflictions. In short, this is the design; and he should have run over all the players in this manner.

Mrs. De Brie. I think the design very humorous, and I knew some of 'em by the very first verses. Go on, pray.

Molière. [*Imitating Beauchateau, a comedian of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, in some lines of the Cid.*]

Pierced to the bottom of my heart,—

And do you know this man in Pompée, de Sertorius?

[*Imitating Hauteroche, a comedian of the Hôtel de Bourgogne*

The enmity which reigns between both parties
Yields there no honour,—

Mrs. De Brie. I know him a little, I think.

Molière. And this?

[Imitating *De Villiers*, a comedian of the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*.] Lord Polibore is dead,—

Mrs. De Brie. Yes, I know who he is; but there are some amongst 'em, I believe, that you'd find it hard to mimic.

Molière. O! there's not one of 'em but what may be caught in some place or other, if I had studied 'em well. But you make me lose time which is precious to us. Let us mind, pray, and not amuse ourselves any more with talking. [*To La Grange*.] Do you take care to play your part of marquis well with me.

Mrs. Molière. Always marquises.

Molière. Yes, always marquises. What the deuce would you have one take for an agreeable character for the stage. The marquis now is the jest of the comedy; and as in all the old comedies there was always a buffoon servant that made the audience laugh, so in all our pièces now there must be always a ridiculous marquis to divert the company.

Mrs. Béjart. 'Tis true, that can't be omitted.

Molière. For you, madam—

Mrs. Du Parc. Nay, as for me, I shall acquit myself very ill of my character, and I don't know why you gave me this ceremonious part.

Molière. Lack-a-day! madam, this is what you said when you had that given you in *The School for Wives Criticised*, yet you acquitted yourself of it to a wonder, and all the world agreed that it could not have been done better than you did it. Believe me, this will be the same, and you'll play it better than you imagine.

Mrs. Du Parc. How can that be? for there's nobody in the world less ceremonious than I am.

Molière. 'Tis true, and in that you better show that you are an excellent comedian, to represent a character well that is so contrary to your humour. Endeavour then, all of you, to take the character of your parts right, and to imagine that you are what you represent. [*To Du Croisy*.] You play the poet, and you ought to fill yourself with that character, to mark the pedant air which he preserves even in the conversation of the beau-monde; that sententious tone of voice, and that exactness of pronunciation which lays a stress on all the syllables, and does not let one letter escape of the strictest orthography. [*To Brécourt*.] As for you, you play a courtier, as you have already done in *The School for Wives Criticised*; that is, you must assume

a sedate air, a natural tone of voice, and make the fewest gestures possible. [To *La Grange*.] As for you, I have nothing to say to you. [To *Mrs. Béjart*.] You represent one of those women who, provided they don't make love, think that everything else is permitted 'em; those women who are always fiercely entrenched in their prudery, look upon everybody with contempt, and think all the good qualities that others possess are nothing in comparison of a wretched honour which nobody regards. Have this character always before your eyes, that you may make the grimaces of it right. [To *Mrs. De Brie*.] As for you, you play one of those women who think they are the most virtuous persons in the world, provided they save appearances; those women who think the crime lies only in the scandal; who would carry on the affairs they have quietly on the foot of an honourable attachment, and call those friends whom other people call gallants. Enter well into this character. [To *Mrs. Molière*.] You play the same character as in the *Criticism*, I have nothing to say to you any more than to *Mrs. Du Parc*. [To *Mrs. Du Croisy*.] As for you, you represent one of those persons who are sweetly charitable to all the world, those women who always give a lash with their tongue *en passant*, and would be very sorry if they suffered their neighbour to be well spoken of. I believe you'll not acquit yourself ill of this part. [To *Mrs. Hervey*.] And for you, you are a conceited Abigail, who's always thrusting her oar into conversation, and catching all her mistress's terms as much as she can. I tell you all your characters, that you may imprint them strongly in your minds. Let us begin to repeat, and see how 'twill do. Oh, here's an impertinent, we wanted no more than this.

SCENE II

*Torrillièr*e, *Molière*, *Brécourt*, *La Grange*, *Du Croisy*, *Mesdemoiselles Du Parc*, *Béjart*, *De Brie*, *Molière*, *Du Croisy*, *Hervey*.

*Torrillièr*e. Good-morrow, Mr. *Molière*.

Molière. Sir, your servant. [Aside.] Plague take the fellow!

*Torrillièr*e. How goes it?

Molière. Very well, at your service. [To the actresses.] Ladies, don't—

*Torrillièr*e. I come from a place where I have been saying a great many fine things of you.

Molière. I'm obliged to you. [Aside.] The devil take thee! [To the actors.] Have a little care—

Torrillière. You play a new piece to-day d'ye?

Molière. Yes, sir. [To the actresses.] Don't forget—

Torrillière. The king makes you do it, hey?

Molière. Yes, sir. [To the actors.] Pray remember to—

Torrillière. What do you call it?

Molière. Yes, sir.

Torrillière. I ask what you call it.

Molière. I'faith! I don't know. [To the actresses.] If you please you must—

Torrillière. How shall you be dressed?

Molière. As you see. [To the actors.] Pray now—

Torrillière. When d'ye begin?

Molière. When the king comes. [Aside.] Deuce on the question-monger!

Torrillière. When do you think he'll come?

Molière. Plague choke me if I know, sir.

Torrillière. Don't you know—

Molière. Look you, sir, I am the most ignorant man in the world, I know nothing of whatever you may ask me I protest t'ye. [Aside.] I'm mad; this tormenting coxcomb comes with an air of tranquillity asking one questions, and never considers that one has other things in one's head.

Torrillière. Ladies, your servant.

Molière. Good. Now he's got on t'other side.

Torrillière. [To Mrs. Du Croisy.] You are as handsome as a little angel. Do you play, both of you, to-day?

[Looking on Mrs. Hervey.

Mrs. Du Croisy. Yes, sir.

Torrillière. Without you the comedy would not be worth much.

Molière. [Whispering the actresses.] Won't you send that man there going?

Mrs. De Brie. [To Torrillière.] Sir, we have something here to repeat together.

Torrillière. Oh! S'life, I'll not hinder you. You have nothing to do but go on.

Mrs. De Brie. But—

Torrillière. No, no, I should be sorry to incommod anybody; do freely what you have to do.

Mrs. De Brie. Yes, but—

Torrillière. I am a man of no ceremony I tell you, and you may repeat what you please.

Molière. Sir, these ladies are loath to tell you, that they could wish nobody were here, during this rehearsal.

Torrillière. Why? there's no danger as to me.

Molière. Sir, 'tis a custom which they observe, and you'll have more pleasure when things surprise you.

Torrillière. I'll go tell 'em then that you are ready.

Molière. Not at all, sir, pray don't make such haste.

SCENE III

Molière, Brécourt, La Grange, Du Croisy, Mesdemoiselles Du Parc, Béjart, De Brie, Molière, Du Croisy, Hervey.

Molière. Ah! how full of impertinents the world is! Well, come, let us begin. First then imagine that the scene is in the king's antechamber, for that's a place where humorous things enough pass every day. 'Tis easy to bring there all the persons we have a mind to, and we may even find reasons to warrant the coming in of the women which I introduce. The comedy opens with two marquises who meet. [To *La Grange.*] Remember you to come as I told you, there, with that air which is called the *bel air*, combing your peruke, and humming a tune between your teeth. La, la, la, la, la, la. Do you range yourselves then, for the two marquises must have room, they are not people to be contained in a small space. [To *La Grange.*] Come speak.

La Grange. Good-morrow, marquis.

Molière. Lack-a-day! that's not the tone of a marquis; you must take it a little higher, the most part of those gentlemen affect a particular manner of speaking to distinguish themselves from the vulgar. Good-morrow, marquis. Begin again.

La Grange. Good-morrow, marquis.

Molière. Hah! marquis, your servant.

La Grange. What art thou doing there?

Molière. S'death! you see I wait till all these gentlemen have unstopp'd the door to show my face there.

La Grange. Plague! what a crowd there is! I don't care to thrust my nose in amongst 'em, and had much rather go in the last.

Molière. There are twenty people who are very sure of not getting in, and yet won't forbear crowding and taking up all the avenues of the gate.

La Grange. Let us bawl out both our names to the porter, that he may call us in.

Molière. That's well enough for thee, but for my part I'll not be played by *Molière*.

La Grange. However, marquis, I think 'twas you he played in his Criticism.

Molière. I ! I'm your slave, 'twas yourself in propria persona.

La Grange. Hah ! Faith you are good enough to apply your own character to me.

Molière. Egad, you are a pleasant mortal, to give to me what belongs to yourself.

La Grange. [Laughing.] Ha, ha, ha ! that's droll.

Molière. [Laughing.] Ha, ha, ha ! that's comical.

La Grange. What ! you'll maintain that 'tis not you that's played in the character of the marquis in the School for Wives Criticised.

Molière. 'Tis true ; 'tis I. Detestable, 'sdeath ! detestable, cream-tart. 'Tis I, 'tis I, certainly 'tis I.

La Grange. Yes, egad, 'tis you, you have no need to rally ; and if you will we'll lay a wager, and see which of us is in the right.

Molière. And what will you lay ?

La Grange. I'll lay an hundred pistoles that 'tis you.

Molière. And I, an hundred pistoles that 'tis you.

La Grange. A hundred pistoles down.

Molière. Down. Ninety pistoles upon Amyntas, and ten pistoles down.

La Grange. I will.

Molière. 'Tis done.

La Grange. Your money runs a great risk.

Molière. Yours is well ventured.

La Grange. Who shall we be judged by ?

Molière. [To Brécourt.] Here's a man that shall judge us.

Chevalier.

Brécourt. What ?

Molière. So, there's t'other takes the tone of a marquis. Did not I tell you that you played a part wherein you should speak naturally ?

Brécourt. True.

Molière. Come then. *Chevalier.*

Brécourt. What ?

Molière. Judge between us a little, on a wager we have laid.

Brécourt. And what is it ?

Molière. We dispute who is the marquis of *Molière*'s Criticism ; he lays 'tis me, and I lay 'tis him.

Brécourt. And I judge that 'tis neither one nor the other ;

you are both fools to apply such things to yourselves ; and this is what I heard Molière complain of t'other day, speaking to persons who charged him with the same thing that you do. He said that nothing displeased him so much as being accused of having an eye to some particular person in the pictures he draws. That his design is to paint the manners, without touching the person ; and that all the characters he represents are airy characters, and properly phantoms which he dresses according to his fancy to delight the spectators. That he should be very sorry if he had marked anybody in 'em ; and that if anything was capable of disgusting him against writing comedies, 'twas the resemblances which people will always find in 'em, and the notion which his enemies maliciously endeavour to keep up, to do him ill offices with some people whom he never thought of. And indeed I find he's in the right ; for why pray should people apply all his gestures and all his words, and endeavour to bring him into quarrels by saying openly, He plays such a one, when they are things which may fit a hundred persons ? As the business of comedy is to represent in general all the imperfections of men, and principally of the men of our age, it is impossible for Molière to write any character which won't hit somebody in the world ; and if he must be accused of having aimed at all the persons in whom the faults he describes are to be found, he must certainly make no more comedies.

Molière. Faith, chevalier, you have a mind to justify Molière, and spare our friend there.

La Grange. Not at all ; 'tis you he spares, and we'll get other judges.

Molière. Be it so. But tell me, chevalier, don't you think that your Molière is exhausted now, and that he'll find no more matter for—

Brécourt. More matter ? Ah ! dear marquis, we shall always furnish him with enough, and we don't take the way to grow wiser for all that he does, and all that he says.

Molière. Stay. You must mark all this passage more Hear me speak it a little.—And that he'll find no more matter for—More matter ? Ah ! dear marquis, we shall always furnish him with enough ; and we don't take the way to grow wiser for all that he does, and all that he says. Do you think he has exhausted in his comedies all the ridicule of mankind ? And, without going from court, has he not still twenty characters of people he has not yet touched upon ? Has he not for example those who profess the greatest friendship in the world, and who, as soon as their backs are turned, esteem it a piece of gallantry to pull one another to

pieces? Has he not those egregious sycophants, those insipid flatterers, who don't season with the least salt the praises they bestow, and all whose flatteries have a fulsome ness which makes those that hear 'em sick at heart? Has he not those base occasional courtiers, those perfidious adorers of fortune who praise you in prosperity and run you down in adversity? Has he not those who are always discontented with the court, those useless attendants, those troublesome assiduous creatures, those people I say who can only reckon their importunities for services, and who expect a recompense for having besieged the king ten years running? Has he not those who equally caress all the world, who hand round their civilities from right to left, and run to all they see with the same embraces, and the same protestations of friendship? Sir, your most humble servant; sir, I'm entirely at your service. Reckon me amongst yours, my dear. Esteem me, sir, as the warmest of your friends. Sir, I'm overjoyed to embrace you. Ah! sir, I did not see you. Do me the favour to employ me, be persuaded that I am entirely yours. You are the man of all the world I esteem the most; there's nobody I honour equal to you; I conjure you to believe it; I beseech you not to doubt on't; your servant, most humble slave. Go, go, marquis, Molière will always have more subjects than he desires, and all that he has touched upon hitherto is but a trifle in comparison of what remains. There's pretty nigh as this should be played.

Brécourt. Enough.

Molière. Go on.

Brécourt. Here's Climene and Eliza.

Molière. [To Mrs. Du Parc and Mrs. Molière.] Upon which you two are to come. [To Mrs. Du Parc.] Do you take care to make grimaces as you ought, and to be very ceremonious. This will be a little constraint upon you, but what can be done? we must sometimes put a violence on ourselves.

Mrs. Molière. Certainly, madam, I knew you a great way off, and saw plainly by your air that it could be nobody but you.

Mrs. Du Parc. I am come to wait here, d'ye see, till a man comes out with whom I have some business.

Mrs. Molière. And so am I.

Molière. Ladies, these trunks will serve you for elbow-chairs.

Mrs. Du Parc. Come, madam, pray take your place.

Mrs. Molière. After you, madam.

Molière. Good. After these little dumb ceremonies, let every one take their place and speak sitting, except the marquises, who must sometimes get up and sometimes sit down.

according to their natural restlessness. *S'death, chevalier, you ought to give your rollers physic.*

Brécourt. How?

Molière. They are very bad.

Brécourt. Your punster's servant.

Mrs. Molière. Lard ! madam, I think your complexion is of a dazzling whiteness, and your lips of a surprising flame colour.

Mrs. Du Parc. Ah ! What do you say, madam ? Don't look at me, I'm extremely ugly to-day.

Mrs. Molière. Pray, madam, lift up your head a little.

Mrs. Du Parc. Fie ! I am frightful I tell you, and quite frighten myself.

Mrs. Molière. You are so handsome !

Mrs. Du Parc. No, no.

Mrs. Molière. Show yourself.

Mrs. Du Parc. Oh ! pray don't.

Mrs. Molière. Pray now.

Mrs. Du Parc. Lard ! no.

Mrs. Molière. Yes, do.

Mrs. Du Parc. You make me mad.

Mrs. Molière. One moment.

Mrs. Du Parc. Ah !

Mrs. Molière. Positively you shall show yourself, we can't bear not to see you.

Mrs. Du Parc. Lard ! What a strange person you are ! you are furiously set upon what you have a mind to.

Mrs. Molière. Ah ! madam, I'll swear you have no disadvantage in appearing in full light. What wicked people are those who affirm that you lay on something ! Truly, I shall now be able to disprove 'em.

Mrs. Du Parc. Alas ! I don't so much as know what they call laying on something. But where are these ladies going ?

Mrs. De Brie. Give us leave, ladies, to tell you, en passant, the most agreeable news in the world. There's Mr. Lysidas come to tell us that there's a play made against Molière, which the great comedians are going to play.

Molière. 'Tis true, they would have read it to me, and 'tis one called Br—Brou—Broussaut that made it.

Du Croisy. Sir, 'tis posted up under the name of Boursault ; but to tell you the secret, a great many people have set their hand to this work, and a pretty high expectation ought to be conceived of it. As all the authors and all the comedians look on Molière as their greatest enemy, we are all united to do him a disservice ;

every one of us has given a stroke of the pencil to his picture, but we take care not to put our names to it. It would have been too glorious for him to sink in the eyes of the world, under the efforts of all Parnassus; and to render his defeat more ignominious, we have chosen an author without reputation on purpose.

Mrs. Du Parc. *For my part, I own t'ye, that I have all the joy at it imaginable.*

Molière. *And I too. Egad, the jester shall be jested on, he shall be under the claw i'faith.*

Mrs. Du Parc. *That will teach him to satrise everybody. What? would not the impertinent wretch let women have wit? does he condemn all our elevated expressions, and pretend that we should always talk in a grovelling manner?*

Mrs. De Brie. *Language is nothing; but he censures all our attachments, however innocent they may be, and according to his way of talking 'tis being criminal to have merit.*

Mrs. Du Croisy. *That's insupportable; there's no woman can do anything for the future. Why don't he leave our husbands in quiet, without opening their eyes, and making 'em take notice of things they never thought of?*

Mrs. Béjart. *All that is not worth minding, but he even satirises virtuous women, and this wicked buffoon gives 'em the title of virtuous she-devils.*

Mrs. Molière. *'Tis an impertinent mortal, he ought to have his pennyworth of it.*

Du Croisy. *The representation of this comedy, madam, will have need of being supported, and the comedians of the hotel—*

Mrs. Du Parc. *Lard, let 'em be under no apprehension; I'll venture my life on the success of their piece.*

Mrs. Molière. *You are in the right, madam, too many people are concerned to think it good. I'll leave you to imagine if all those who think themselves satirised by Molière won't take the opportunity to be revenged on him by applauding this comedy.*

Brécourt. [Ironically.] *Certainly, and for my part I can answer for twelve marquises, six romantic ladies, twenty coquettes, and thirty cuckolds who won't fail to clap it.*

Mrs. Molière. *Indeed. Why should he go to offend all those persons, and particularly cuckolds who are the best people in the world.*

Molière. *By the stars I'm told that they'll pay off both him and all his comedies in a handsome manner, and that all the comedians and authors, from the cedar to the hyssop, are devilishly animated against him.*

Mrs. Molière. It will fit him but right. Why does he write odious pieces which all Paris go to see, and wherein he describes people so well that everybody knows themselves in 'em? Why don't he make comedies like those of Mr. Lysidas? he would have nobody against him, and all the authors would speak well of it. 'Tis true that such plays have not that great concourse of people; but in return they are always well written, nobody writes against 'em, and all those that see 'em are extremely desirous to think 'em good.

Du Croisy. 'Tis true I have the advantage of not making myself enemies, and of having all my works approved of by the learned.

Mrs. Molière. You do well to be satisfied with yourself. That's worth more than all the applause of the public, and than all the money which may be got by Molière's pieces. What matter is it to you whether people come to your plays, provided they are approved of by the gentlemen your brethren?

La Grange. But when do they play the Painter's Picture?

Du Croisy. I don't know but I shall be in the utmost readiness to appear in the first row, to cry out, O how fine!

Molière. And I too, egad.

La Grange. And I likewise, as I hope to be saved.

Mrs. Du Parc. For my part, I'll show myself a woman there as I ought, and answer for a bravery of approbation, which shall rout all the adverse judges; 'tis really the least thing we ought to do, to support with our praises the revenger of our interests.

Mrs. Molière. 'Tis well said.

Mrs. De Brie. And what we all must do.

Mrs. Béjart. Certainly.

Mrs. Du Croisy. Without doubt.

Mrs. Hervey. No quarter to this mimicker of people.

Molière. I'faith, friend chevalier, your Molière must hide himself.

Brécourt. Who, he? I promise you, marquis, he intends to go upon the stage to laugh with all the others at the picture they have drawn of him.

Molière. Egad, 'twill be on the wrong side of his face that he'll laugh then.

Brécourt. Come, come, perhaps he'll find more cause to laugh than you think of. I was shown the piece, and as everything that's agreeable in it are actually the thoughts that were taken from Molière, the joy which that may give will doubtless have no reason to displease him. For as to the part where they endeavour to

blacken him, I am the most deceived in the world if 'tis approved by anybody. And as to all the people whom they have striven to animate against him, because he makes, they say, portraits too like, besides that it has an ill look, I never saw anything more ridiculous, or worse taken, and I never yet thought that a comedian ought to be blamed for describing men too well.

La Grange. The comedians told me they expected an answer from him, and that—

Brécourt. An answer, faith I should think him a great fool if he took the pains to answer their invectives. All the world sufficiently knows from what motive they proceed, and the best answer he can make 'em is a comedy that may succeed like all his others. That's the true way of being revenged on 'em as he ought; and of the humour I know 'em to be, I am well assured that a new piece, which may take away people from theirs, would vex 'em more than all the satires that can be made on their persons.

Molière. But chevalier—

Mrs. Béjart. Let me interrupt the rehearsal a little. [To Molière.] Give me leave to tell you, if I had been in your place I'd have carried things otherwise. All the world expects a vigorous answer from you, and after the manner, they tell me, that you are treated in this comedy, you ought in justice to say everything against the comedians, and not to spare one of 'em.

*Molière. I'm provoked to hear you talk in this manner, and this is the madness peculiar to you women; you would have me take fire at once against 'em, and after their example go and break out immediately into invectives and abuses. A great deal of honour I should get by it, and a great deal of vexation I should give 'em! Are not they readily prepared for such sort of things, and when they were deliberating if they should play the *Painter's Picture* for fear of an answer, did not some amongst 'em answer, let him abuse us as much as he will provided we can get money? Is not that the mark of a soul very sensible of shame, and shall not I be well revenged of 'em by giving 'em what they are willing to receive.*

*Mrs. De Brie. Yet they made great complaints of three or four words which you said of 'em in your *Criticism*, and *Romantic Ladies*.*

Molière. 'Tis true, those three or four words are very offensive, and they have great reason to quote 'em. Go, go, 'tis not that; the greatest harm I have done 'em is, that I have had the good fortune to please a little more than they could have

wished, and all their proceeding since we came to Paris, has too well shown what touches 'em; but let 'em do what they please, all their undertakings ought not to disquiet me. They criticise on my pieces! so much the better, and Heaven forbid I should ever write one to please them, that would be a bad business for me.

Mrs. De Brie. There's no great pleasure however in seeing one's works pulled to pieces.

Molière. And what signifies it to me; have I not obtained by my comedy all I could wish to obtain by it? Since it has had the happiness to please the august persons whom I particularly strive to please? have not I cause to be satisfied with its destiny, and don't all their censures come too late? Is it me, pray, that it regards now? And when they attack a piece that has had success, is it not rather attacking the judgment of those who approved it, than his skill that wrote it.

Mrs. De Brie. I'faith I should have played off that little Monsieur Author, who pretends to write against those who don't trouble their heads with him.

Molière. You're a fool. What a fine subject to divert the court Mr. Boursault had been! I would fain know in what manner he might have been fitted out to make him entertaining, and if, were he to be ridiculed on the stage, he would be happy enough to make people laugh. It would be too great an honour to him to be played before an august assembly, he would desire nothing more, and he attacks me in gaiety of heart, on purpose to make himself known, be it in what manner it will. He's a man that has nothing to lose, and the comedians would not have set him upon me, but to engage me in a foolish quarrel, and to take me off by that artifice from the other works I have to write, and yet are you simple enough to fall all into this snare? But in short I'll make my declaration upon this point public. I don't intend to make any answer to all their criticisms and counter-criticisms. Let 'em say all the bad things in the world of my pieces, I agree to it. Let 'em new make 'em after us, turn 'em like a suit of clothes to bring 'em on their stage, and endeavour to profit by what agreeableness they may find in them and by a little of my good fortune; I consent to it, they have need on't, and I should be very glad to contribute to their subsistence, provided they be contented with what I can decently grant them. Courtesy ought to have bounds, and there are things which make neither the spectators, nor him of whom they are spoken, laugh. I heartily abandon to 'em my works, my figure, my gestures,

my words, my tone of voice, and my manner of reciting, to do and say what they please of 'em, if they can draw any advantage from 'em. I don't oppose any of these things, and shall be overjoyed if this can please the world; but when I give 'em up all this, they ought to do me the favour to leave me the rest, and not to touch on things of the nature of those upon which I am told they attack me in their plays. This is what I must civilly entreat of the honest gentleman who undertakes to write for 'em, and this is all the answer they shall have from me.

Mrs. Béjart. But in short—

Molière. But in short you'd make a fool of me. Let's talk of this no more; we amuse ourselves with talking, instead of rehearsing our play. Whereabouts were we? I can't remember.

Mrs. De Brie. You were at the passage—

Molière. S'life! I hear a noise, the king's certainly come, and I see plainly we shan't have time to go through it. See what 'tis to fool one's time away. Well, you must do as well as you can then for the rest.

Mrs. Béjart. By my faith I'm seized with fear, and can't play my part unless I rehearse it all.

Molière. How! you can't play your part?

Mrs. Béjart. No.

Mrs. Du Parc. Nor I mine.

Mrs. De Brie. Nor I neither.

Mrs. Molière. Nor I.

Mrs. Hervey. Nor I.

Mrs. Du Croisy. Nor I.

Molière. What do you think to do then? Do you all make a jest of me?

SCENE IV

Béjart, Molière, La Grange, Du Croisy, Mesdemoiselles Du Parc, Béjart, De Brie, Molière, Du Croisy, Hervey.

Béjart. Gentlemen, I come to give you notice that the king's come, and waits for you to begin.

Molière. Oh! sir, I am in the greatest pain in the world, I am distracted at this very time I'm talking to you; these women are frightened, and say they must rehearse their parts before they begin. We beg one moment's favour more. The king has goodness, and he knows very well that the thing has been done in haste.

SCENE V

Molière, and the same actors, except Béjart.

Molière. Oh! Pray try to recover yourselves; take courage, I beg of you.

Mrs. Du Parc. You should go and excuse yourself.

Molière. How should I excuse myself?

SCENE VI

Molière, and the same actors, a Busybody.

A Busybody. Gentlemen, begin.

Molière. Presently, sir. I believe I shall lose my senses in this business here, and——

SCENE VII

Molière, and the same actors, a second Busybody.

Second Busybody. Gentlemen, begin.

Molière. In a moment, sir. [To his companions.] What! would you have me have the assurance——

SCENE VIII

Molière, and the same actors, a third Busybody.

Third Busybody. Gentlemen, begin.

Molière. Yes, sir; we are going to't. How officious these people are to come and bid us begin, when the king did not order them to do it!

SCENE IX

Molière, and the same actors, a fourth Busybody.

Fourth Busybody. Gentlemen, begin.

Molière. 'Tis done, sir. What then! shall I have the confusion——

SCENE X

Béjart, Molière, and the same actors.

Molière. Sir, you are come to bid us begin, but——

Béjart. No, gentlemen, I come to tell you that the king

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has been informed of the perplexity you are in, and by a very particular goodness defers your new comedy till another time, and contents himself for the present with the first you can give him.

Molière. Oh! sir, you give me new life; the king does us the greatest favour in the world by giving us time for what he desired; and we'll all go and thank him for the extreme goodness he shows us.

THE MAN-HATER
(A COMEDY)

THE MAN-HATER, a Comedy of Five Acts in Verse, acted at Paris at the
Theatre of the Palace-Royal, June 4, 1666.

The Man-Hater is looked upon by the polite nations as the most perfect piece of all French comedy. If we consider the object of it, it is a universal critique on mankind; and if we examine the conduct of it, we shall find that the whole has a relation to *The Man-Hater*, whom we never lose sight of, and who is the centre from whence the rays of light flow which shed themselves round the other characters and enlighten them. The indulgent Philinte who, without either loving or censuring other men, bears with their faults only from the necessity he is under of living amongst them, and from the impossibility of making them better, forms a happy contrast to the rigid Alceste, who, not being willing to give in to the follies of men, hates and rails at them because they are vicious. The plot is not very lively, but he has united, with great verisimilitude, some characters which by their manners opposed to, or compared with that of Alceste, might more or less play off the love of slander, coquetry, vanity, jealousy, and almost all the follies of mankind. One would think that misanthropy should be incompatible with love, but here a man-hater, enamoured with a coquette, furnishes the author with new springs to unfold his character more perfectly. This is one of those kind of strokes which art alone is not capable of without being inspired by genius and guided by good taste Molière in exposing the whimsical humour of Alceste did not intend to discredit that which was the source and principle of it. it was the roughness of a virtue not sociable enough, nor complaisant enough to human weakness which he ridiculed, and was the fault which he endeavoured to reform in the age.

These strokes were too fine to strike spectators who had been accustomed to stronger colours, they could not bring to a comedy that degree of attention which was necessary to discover the delicate passages that have been since admired in this piece; the noble comic humour which reigns in it was not perceived, and in spite of the purity and elegance of the style it was but coldly received.

There is a report goes of an odd accident which might contribute to this; at the first representation, after the reading of Oronte's song, the pit gave applause; but Alceste showed afterwards in the same scene that the thoughts and verse of that song were such gewgaw-stuff as good sense would despise; upon which the public being confounded at having taken its part were disgusted at the piece. However Molière was not discouraged, but thought it proper to endeavour to bring back the spectators by some piece not so good, but more diverting, in hopes that the public might be insensibly brought to discover the beauties and know the value of the good one: whereupon he added *The Mock-Doctor* to *The Man-*

Hater, and then Alcestes passed under the countenance of Sganarel; but he suppressed the last piece as soon as he found that the merit of the first was known; had it not been for this contrivance, *The Man-Hater* would have fallen a victim to injustice or ignorance. The success it then had was no disgrace to *The Mock-Doctor*, their different natures were only distinguished, and the little piece is still seen with pleasure.

ACTORS

ALCESTES, *in love with Célimène.*

PHILINTES, *friend to Alcestes.*

ORONTES, *in love with Célimène.*

CÉLIMÈNE, *in love with Alcestes.*

ELIANTE, *cousin to Célimène.*

ARSINOÉ, *friend to Célimène.*

ACASTES, }
CLITANDER, } *Marquises.*

BASQUE, *servant to Célimène.*

A GUARD of the court of the Mareschals of France

Du Bois, *servant to Alcestes.*

SCENE: Paris, in Célimène's house

ACT I

SCENE I

Philintes, Alcestes.

Philintes. What's the matter? What ails you?

Alcestes. [Sitting.] Pray leave me.

Philintes. But once more tell me, what whim-

Alcestes. Leave me, I say, and go hide yourself.

Philintes. But you might hear people at least, without being angry.

Alcestes. I will be angry, and I won't hear.

Philintes. I can't comprehend you in your hasty humours; and in short, though a friend, I am one of the first—

Alcestes. [Rising hastily.] I, your friend? Strike that out o' your books. I have hitherto professed myself to be so; but after what I have now discovered in you, I flatly declare to you that I am so no longer; I'll have no place in corrupt hearts.

Philintes. I am guilty then, Alcestes, in your account?

Alcestes. Go, you ought to die with mere shame, there's no excusing such an action, and every man of honour ought to be shocked at it. I see you stifle a man with caresses, and profess the utmost tenderness for him; you overcharge the transport of your embraces with protestations, offers, and oaths: and when I afterwards ask you, who is this man, you scarce can tell me what his name is. Your hot fit's all over the moment you are parted, and you treat him, to me, as a person absolutely indifferent. S'death! 'tis an unworthy, base, infamous thing, so far to demean one's self, as to act contrary to one's own sentiments. And if, by ill-luck, I had done as much, I should have gone that instant, and hanged myself for vexation.

Philintes. I don't see, for my part, that this is a hanging matter, and I shall petition you, that you would graciously think fit, that I mitigate a little the severity of your sentence, and with your leave, not hang myself for this fact.

Alcestes. How awkwardly this raillery sits upon you!

Philintes. But seriously, what would you have one do?

Alcestes. I would have you be sincere, and like a man of honour, let no word slip, which comes not from the heart.

Philintes. When a man comes and embraces you with joy; you should in reason pay him in the same coin, answer his eagerness as one can, return him offer for offer, and oaths for oaths.

Alcestes. No, I can't endure that base method, which the generality of your people of mode affect; and I hate nothing so much, as the contortions of all those great protestation-mongers, those affable dealers in frivolous embraces, thos obliging utterers of empty words, who attack everybody wit civilities, and treat the man of worth and the coxcomb with the same air. What good does it do you, for a man to caress you, swear amity, faith, zeal, esteem, tenderness, and make a grand eulogium upon you, when he runs to do the same to the first scoundrel he meets? No, no, there's not a soul of the least good disposition, will accept an esteem so prostituted, and the most illustrious will have but a poor relish, when one finds one is blended with the whole universe. Esteem is founded on some preference, and to esteem all the world, is to esteem nobody. Since you give into these vices of the times, i'faith you are not calculated to be one of my companions; I refuse the vast complaisance of a heart, which makes no difference of merit; I would have people distinguish me; and, to cut the matter short, a friend to all mankind is no friend for me.

Philintes. But whilst we are of the world, 'tis necessary that we pay some outward civilities which custom demands.

Alcestes. No, I tell ye we ought to chastise, without mercy, that shameful commerce of appearances of friendship. I would have us be men, and think that on all occasions the very bottom of our hearts should show itself in our discourse; that it should be that which speaks, and that our sentiments should never be masked under vain compliments.

Philintes. There are a good many occasions, in which an absolute frankness would be ridiculous, and hardly be endured; and sometimes, no offence to your austere honour, 'tis right to conceal what we have in our hearts. Would it be proper or decent to tell thousands o' people what we think of 'em? when we have to do with a man we hate, or who is disagreeable to us, ought we to declare the matter to him, just as it is?

Alcestes. Yes.

Philintes. What! would you tell the antiquated Emilia, that it ill becomes her, at her age, to set up for a beauty? and that the white she lays on so thick, is shocking to everybody?

Alcestes. Without doubt.

Philintes. Or Dorilas, that he's too impertinent? And that there is not an ear at court which he does not tire in recounting his bravery, and the splendour of his family?

Alcestes. Very right.

Philintes. You jest sure.

Alcestes. I don't jest; and I shall spare nobody in this point My eyes are too much offended; neither court, nor city present me with anything but objects to provoke my spleen. It throws me into a melancholy humour, a profound chagrin, when I see men converse together in the manner they do; I find nothing anywhere, but base flattery, but injustice, interest, treachery, and knavery; I can hold no longer, I'm distracted and have taken up a resolution to break abruptly with all mankind.

Philintes. This sour philosopher is a little too savage; I can't help laughing to see you in these gloomy fits; and methinks I see in us two, who have been brought up together, the two brothers, which *The School for Husbands* describes, of whom . . .

Alcestes. Pray, let's ha' done with your insipid comparisons.

Philintes. No, truly, leave you off all these rude insults. The world won't alter its ways, for all your pains, and since frankness has such charms with you, I shall tell you frankly that this distemper o' yours is as good as a comedy, wherever you go: and that such a mighty wrath against the manners of the age, makes you ridiculous with a great many people.

Alcestes. So much the better, s'death, so much the better; that's what I want, 'tis a good sign, and I'm overjoyed at it; all men are to such a degree odious to me, that I should be sorry to be wise in their eyes.

Philintes. You wish very ill then to human nature?

Alcestes. Yes, I have conceived a horrible aversion to it.

Philintes. Shall all poor mortals, without any exception, be involved in this aversion? Besides, are there not some in our age—

Alcestes. No, 'tis general, and I hate all men. Some, because they are wicked and mischievous; and others, for being complaisant to the wicked, and not having that vigorous hatred for 'em, which vice ought to give to all virtuous minds. One sees the unjust excess of this complaisance to that sheer villain, with whom I have a lawsuit; the treacherous rascal is plainly seen through his mask; he is everywhere known for what he is; his rolling eyes and soft tone impose only upon strangers.

People know that this wretched fellow, who richly deserves the gallows, has pushed himself into the world by dirty jobs, and that the splendid condition these have brought him to, makes merit repine and virtue blush; whatever shameful titles persons everywhere give him, his wretched honour sees nobody on its side; call him infamous knave and cursed villain, all the world agrees to't, and nobody contradicts it. In the meantime his grimace is everywhere welcome, they entertain him, smile upon him, he insinuates himself into all companies: and if there is any rank to be disputed by canvassing, you'll see him carry it over a man of the greatest worth. Plague! these are to me mortal wounds, to see men keep any measures with vice; I am strongly moved to fly into some desert to avoid all approach of human creatures.

Philintes. Lack-a-day! Let us give ourselves less trouble about the manners of the age, and make some small allowances to human nature; let us not examine it with so great rigour, but look upon its defects with some indulgence. This world requires a tractable virtue, one may be blameworthy by stress of wisdom, right reason avoids every extremity, and would have us be wise with sobriety. That great stiffness in the virtues of ancient times, too much shocks our age and common usage; it would have mortals too perfect; we must yield to the times without obstinacy, and 'tis an extremity of folly to busy ourselves in correcting the world. I observe, as you do, a thousand things every day, which might go better taking another course; but whatever I may discover in every transaction, people don't see me in a rage, like you. I take men with great calmness, just as they are, I accustom myself to bear with what they do; and I think that at court as well as in the city, my phlegm is as much a philosopher as your choler.

Alcestes. But this phlegm, sir, which reasons so nicely, this same phlegm, can nothing ruffle it? Should it happen by chance that a friend should betray you, that a subtle plot were formed to get your estate, or that people should endeavour to spread ill reports of you, could you see all this, without putting yourself in a passion?

Philintes. Yes, I look upon these defects that you make such a noise about, as vices linked with human nature; and in short, my mind is no more shocked to see a man a knave, unjust, dishonest, selfish, than to see a vulture ravenous after carnage, apes mischievous, and wolves full of rage.

Alcestes. Shall I see myself betrayed, torn to pieces, robbed,

without being——Plague! I won't talk at all, this is such an impudent way of reasoning.

Philintes. Faith, you will do well to hold your tongue. Exclaim something less against your antagonist, and bestow part of your care on your lawsuit.

Alcestes. I won't bestow any upon it, I have said it.

Philintes. But who then do you expect should solicit for you?

Alcestes. Who do I expect? Reason, my just right, equity.

Philintes. Shall you pay no visit to any of the judges?

Alcestes. No; what, is my cause unjust, or dubious?

Philintes. I grant ye, but canvassing is a plaguy thing, and——

Alcestes. No, I am determined not to move one step. I am in the wrong, or I am in the right.

Philintes. Don't you trust to that.

Alcestes. I shan't stir.

Philintes. Your adversary is strong, and may by caballing draw——

Alcestes. It signifies nothing.

Philintes. You'll be deceived.

Alcestes. Be it so. I'll see the success of it.

Philintes. But——

Alcestes. I shall have the pleasure to lose my suit.

Philintes. But in short——

Alcestes. I shall see by this trial, whether men will have impudence enough, will be wicked, villainous, perverse enough to do me injustice, in the face of all the world.

Philintes. What a strange man!

Alcestes. I wish, though it cost me a great deal, that for the pleasantness of the thing, I had lost my cause.

Philintes. In good earnest, Alcestes, people would laugh at you, did they hear you talk in this manner.

Alcestes. So much the worse for him that laughed.

Philintes. But this rectitude, which you require in everything with so much exactness, this absolute integrity, that you entrench yourself in, do you find it in the person you are in love with? I'm astonished, for my part, that since, as it should seem, you and human nature are by the ears together, yet in spite of all that can render it odious to you, you should have found that in it which charms your eyes. And what surprises me still the more, is that strange choice your heart is fixed upon. The sincere Eliante has an inclination for you, the prude Arsinoé casts a sheep's-eye upon you; in the meantime your

heart rejects their passion, whilst Célimène amuses it in her chains, whose coquettish humour and slanderous temper seem to give in so strongly to the manners of the times. Whence comes it, that bearing so mortal a hatred to these, you should easily bear with such a degree of 'em as this fair one possesses? Are they no longer defects in so sweet an object? Don't you see them? Or do you excuse 'em?

Alcestes. No, the passion I have for this young widow, does not shut my eyes against the defects one sees in her, and with what ardour soever she may have inspired me, I am the first to see them, as I am to condemn them. But, with all this, do what I can, I confess my foible, she has the art of pleasing me: in vain I see her faults, in vain I blame them, in spite of me she makes me love her; her agreeableness turns the scale, and without doubt my affection will be able to rid her mind of these vices of the times.

Philintes. If you do that, you do not do a little. You believe then, that you are beloved by her?

Alcestes. Yes, troth, I should not love her at all, if I did not think so.

Philintes. But if her affection for you discovers itself plainly, whence comes it that your rivals give you so much uneasiness?

Alcestes. 'Tis because a heart thoroughly smitten, would have the person wholly to itself; and I come here only with the design of telling her everything my passion inspires me with upon that head.

Philintes. For my part, had I nothing to do but give way to love, her cousin Eliante should have all my sighs; her heart which esteems you, is solid and sincere; and this choice which is more agreeable, would be more for your interest.

Alcestes. It's true, my reason daily tells me so. But reason s not what governs love.

Philintes. I'm terribly afraid for this love of yours, and the hopes you have may—

SCENE II

Orontes, Alcestes, Philintes.

Orontes. [To *Alcestes.*] I was informed below, that Eliante and Célimène were both gone abroad to make some purchase. But as they told me you were here, I came up to assure you, with a sincere heart, that I have conceived an incredible esteem

for you; and that for a long time, this esteem has given me an ardent desire to be in the number of your friends. Yes, my heart loves to do justice to merit, and I ardently long that the bond of friendship might unite us. I think that a friend who is zealous, and of my quality too, is certainly not to be rejected. [During this time Alcestes appears in a musing posture, and seems not to know that Orontes speaks to him.] 'Tis to you, [To Alcestes.] if you please, that this discourse is addressed.

Alcestes. To me, sir?

Orontes. To you. Is it offensive to you?

Alcestes. Not at all, but my surprise is very great, and I did not expect the honour I receive.

Orontes. The esteem I hold you in, ought not by any means to surprise you, you may claim it from the whole universe.

Alcestes. Sir—

Orontes. The whole kingdom contains nothing which is not below the shining merit the world discovers in you.

Alcestes. Sir—

Orontes. Yes, for my part, I hold you preferable to everything that I perceive the most considerable in it.

Alcestes. Sir—

Orontes. May the sky crush me if I lie; and, to confirm you in my sentiments, permit me with an open heart to embrace you, and to demand a place in your friendship. Your hand, if you please. You promise me your friendship?

Alcestes. Sir—

Orontes. What! do ye refuse?

Alcestes. Sir, 'tis too much honour you design me. But friendship demands something more of mystery, and 'tis certainly to profane the name, to think of bringing it upon all occasions. This union must spring from judgment and choice; before we engage ourselves, 'tis necessary we should be better acquainted, and we may possibly be of such complexions, that we may both of us heartily repent of the bargain.

Orontes. Egad, this is talking upon the affair like a man of sense, and I esteem you still the more for it; let us leave it to time then, to form so delightful a union. But in the meanwhile, I make you an entire offer of myself; if I am to ask any favour for you at court, the world knows I make some figure near the king; I have his ear, and faith, he always treats me with all the freedom in the world. In short, I am in all respects absolutely yours. And as you are a man of bright parts, I come, by way of commencing this agreeable union, to show you a song, which

I made a little while ago, and to know whether 'tis fit I should expose it to the public.

Alcestes. Sir, I am a very unfit person to decide the affair, be so good to excuse me.

Orontes. Why so?

Alcestes. I have the weakness of being a little more sincere in this case than I should be.

Orontes. The very thing I ask; I should have room for complaint, if exposing myself to you that you might speak without dissimulation, you should deceive me, and hide anything from me in disguise.

Alcestes. Since you are pleased to have it so, sir, I am very willing.

Orontes. A song——'Tis a song. *Hope*——'Tis a lady who had flattered my passion with some hope. *Hope*——These are none of your grand pompous verses, but your slighter verses, soft, tender, and languishing.

Alcestes. We shall see.

Orontes. *Hope*——I don't know whether the style may appear sufficiently clear and easy; and whether you will be satisfied with the choice of the words.

Alcestes. We shall see presently, sir.

Orontes. Besides, you must know that I took up no longer time than a quarter of an hour in making of 'em.

Alcestes. Let us see, sir, the time makes nothing to the purpose.

Orontes.

Hope, for a while, allays, 'tis true,
And rocks to sleep our tedious pain:
But, Phyllis, poor gain must accrue,
When nothing marches in its train.

Philinte. I am charmed already with this little taste.

Alcestes. [Softly.] What! Have you the assurance to admire this?

Orontes.

You showed indeed great complaisance,
Less had been better, take my word;
Why should you be at that expense,
When hope was all you could afford?

Philinte. O! in what gallant terms these things are couched!

Alcestes. [Softly.] O fie! vile complaisance! You praise things that are stupid.

Orontes.

But if an endless expectation,
Push to the last extreme my passion,
Death must be my reliever.

Nor, to prevent this, serves your care;
Fair Phyllis, 'tis downright despair,
When we must hope for ever.

Philintes. The conclusion is pretty, amorous, admirable.

Alcestes. [Softly.] Plague o' your conclusion! Deuce take that poisoned tongue! would you had concluded your head off!

Philintes. I never heard verses so well turned.

Alcestes. [Softly.] S'death—

Orontes. [To *Philintes.*] You flatter me, and you think perhaps—

Philintes. No, I don't flatter at all.

Alcestes. [Softly.] Heh! What d'ye then, treacherous creature?

Orontes. [To *Alcestes.*] But now for you, you know the agreement we made; pray, speak with sincerity.

Alcestes. Sir, this is always a most delicate affair, and in point of genius, we love people should flatter us. But I was saying one day to a certain person who shall be nameless, seeing some verses of his composition, that it is necessary a fine gentleman should always have a great command over that itch of writing which we are so apt to catch; that he should keep a strait rein over the great propensity one has to make a show with such amusements; and that people are exposed, by the eagerness of showing their works, to make but a very scurvy figure.

Orontes. What, would you have me understand by this, that I am wrong to pretend—

Alcestes. I don't say that. But I told him that a heavy composition does a person's business, that there needs no other foible to disgrace a man; and that though they had in other respects a hundred fine qualities, yet we view people on their weak sides.

Orontes. D'ye mean that you have any objection to my song?

Alcestes. I don't say that; but that he should not write, I set before his eyes how, in our time, this thirst has spoiled many very worthy people.

Orontes. What, do I write ill? and should I resemble them?

Alcestes. I don't say that. But in short, says I to him, what occasion so urgent have you to rhyme? and who the deuce drives you into print? if one could pardon the sending a bad book into

the world, it would only be in those wretches who compose for a livelihood. Take my advice, withstand your present intentions, keep such business as this from public view, and don't throw away what people challenge from you, the reputation which you have at court of a worthy gentleman, to receive by the hands of a greedy printer, that of a ridiculous and wretched author. This is what I endeavoured to make him comprehend.

Orontes. Admirably well put; and I think I understand you. But mayn't I know what it is in my song, that—

Alcestes. Frankly, 'tis a very good one to lock up in your scrutoir; you have been governed by villainous models, and your expressions are not at all natural.

Pray what is,—And rocks to sleep our tedious pain?
 And what,—When nothing marches in its train?
 What,—Why should you be at that expense,
 When hope was all you could afford?
 And that,—Fair Phyllis, 'tis downright despair,
 When we must hope for ever?

This figurative style, that people are so vain of, is wide of all just character, and of truth; 'tis nothing but playing with words, pure affectation, and 'tis not thus that nature speaks. The wretched taste of the age in this case is horrible. Our fore-fathers, unpolished as they were, had a much better one; and I take all this that people admire, to be much inferior to an old ballad, that I am going to repeat to you:

Had Royal Henry given to me
 His Paris large and fair,
 And I straightway must quit for aye
 The love of my own dear;
 I'd say pardie, my Liege Henry,
 Take back your Paris fair;
 Much mo love I my dear, truly,
 Much mo love I my dear.

The versification is not rich, and the style is antiquated. But don't you see that this is infinitely better than such gewgaw stuff as good sense would despise? And that pure nature speaks here void of art?

Had Royal Henry given to me
 His Paris large and fair,
 And I straightway must quit for aye,
 The love of my own dear;

I'd say, pardie, my Liege Henry,
Take back your Paris fair;
Much mo love I my dear, truly,
Much mo love I my dear.

This is what a heart may say, that's really smitten. [To *Philintes* laughing.] Yes, Mr. Sneerer, in spite of all your *beaux esprits*, I value this more than all the flourishing fustian of the tinsel, which people so generally cry up.

Orontes. And I maintain that my verses are very good.

Alcestes. You have your reasons to think 'em so; but you will please to allow me to have others which would be excused from submitting to yours.

Orontes. 'Tis sufficient for me that I see other people value them.

Alcestes. 'Tis because they have the art of dissimulation; and I have not.

Orontes. Do you think you have so great a share of wit?

Alcestes. If I commended your verses I should have more.

Orontes. I shall be very well satisfied without your approbation.

Alcestes. 'Twill be very expedient, if you please, that you should be satisfied without it.

Orontes. I should be very glad, for trial, that you would compose some verses upon the same subject after your manner.

Alcestes. I might unluckily make as bad ones; but I should take care how I showed 'em to people.

Orontes. You speak to me with a great deal of assurance, and this sufficiency—

Alcestes. Pray seek somebody else to flatter you, and not me.

Orontes. But, my little sir, don't be so much in your altitudes.

Alcestes. Faith, my great sir, I am just as much in my altitudes as I should be.

Philintes. [Stepping between them.] Nay, gentlemen, that is carrying the matter too far, pray have done with it.

Orontes. I'm in the wrong, I confess it, and I quit the place. I am your slave, sir, with all my heart.

Alcestes. And I am, sir, your humble servant.

SCENE III

Philintes, Alcestes.

Philintes. Well, you see; by being too sincere, you had like to have had a troublesome affair upon your hands; and I saw that *Orontes* wanted to be flattered, when—

Alceste. Don't speak to me.

Philinte. But—

Alceste. No more society.

Philinte. 'Tis too much—

Alceste. Leave me.

Philinte. If I—

Alceste. No more words.

Philinte. But how—

Alceste. I hear nothing.

Philinte. But—

Alceste. Again?

Philinte. This is an outrageous—

Alceste. S'death, this is too much, don't follow me at the heels.

Philinte. You joke with me, I shan't leave you.

ACT II

SCLNE I

Alceste, Célimène.

Alceste. Madam, would you have me be plain with you? I am very much dissatisfied with your manner of behaviour: it increases my choler too much when I think of it, and I perceive 'tis necessary we should break with each other. Yes, I should deceive you to talk otherwise, sooner or later we must break, that's without dispute; and I might promise you the contrary a thousand times, but I should not have it in my power to do it.

Célimène. 'Tis in order to scold me then, I perceive, that you were pleased to wait upon me home?

Alceste. I don't scold; but your humour, madam, opens too easy an access in your heart to the first-corner; one sees too many lovers laying siege to you, and my mind can by no means be reconciled to this.

Célimène. Will you needs have me to blame for gaining lovers? Can I hinder people from thinking me handsome? And when they make tender efforts to visit me, ought I to take a stick and beat 'em out o' doors.

Alceste. No, 'tis not a stick, madam, you want, but a heart less yielding, and less melting at their love-tales. I know you

are surrounded with charms, go where you will, but the reception you give 'em retains the persons your eyes attract; and that gentleness which offers itself to those who throw down their arms, finishes in every heart the work which your charms had begun. The too gay hope you inspire 'em with, fixes their assiduous attendance about you; and a complaisance in you, something less extensive, would drive away that great crowd of admirers. But, however, tell me, madam, by what chance your Clitander has the happiness to please you so much? Upon what fund of merit and sublime virtue do you ground the honour of your esteem? Is it by the long nail he has upon his little finger, that he has gained the great esteem with you, which we see him have? Did you surrender, with all the beau-monde, to the shining merit of his fair periwig? Or are they his large pantaloons, that make you in love with him? Has the huge collection of ribands the knack of charming you? Is it by the allurement of his vast rhingrave, that he has gained your heart, whilst he was acting the part of your slave? Or has his manner of laughing, and his soft tone of voice found the secret of touching you?

Célimène. How unjustly do you take umbrage at him! Don't you very well know why I keep fair with him? That he can interest all his friends in my lawsuit, as he has actually promised me to do?

Alcestes. Lose your lawsuit, madam, with firmness of mind, and don't keep fair with a rival, who is offensive to me.

Célimène. But you are grown jealous of all the world.

Alcestes. 'Tis because all the world is kindly received by you.

Célimène. That's the very thing which ought to calm that wild spirit of yours, since my complaisance diffuses itself to all; and you would have more room to be offended, should you see me taken up entirely with one.

Alcestes. But as to me whom you blame so much for jealousy, what have I more than the rest of them, pray madam?

Célimène. The happiness to know that you are beloved.

Alcestes. But what room has my inflamed heart to believe that?

Célimène. I think that as I have taken the pains to tell you so, a confession of that kind should be sufficient for you.

Alcestes. But who shall assure me at the same time, that you mayn't say quite as much, perhaps, to everybody else?

Célimène. A pretty, amorous speech this, truly, for a lover to make; and you treat me in a gallant manner here. Well,

to remove from you a suspicion of this nature, I here unsay all that I have said: and nothing can deceive you more than yourself. Rest satisfied.

Alcestes. S'heart, must I then love you? Oh! could I once again recover this heart o' mine out o' your hands, I would bless Heaven for the singular happiness! I make no secret of it, I do all that's possible to break this cruel attachment of my heart: but my greatest efforts have hitherto done nothing, and 'tis for my sins that I love you thus.

Célimène. 'Tis very true, your love for me is unparalleled.

Alcestes. Yes, upon that head I can defy all the world. My love is inconceivable, and never, madam, did any man love as I do.

Célimène. In good truth, the method of it is entirely new, for you love people to pick a quarrel with 'em; and your passion breaks out only in peevish expressions, never did anybody see such a growling lover.

Alcestes. But it only sticks with you, whether this chagrin shall vanish; I beg of you, let's cut short all our debates, let us converse with open heart, and see to put a stop—

SCENE II

Célimène, Alcestes, Basque.

Célimène. What's the matter?

Basque. Acastes is below.

Célimène. Well, bid him come up.

SCENE III

Célimène, Alcestes.

Alcestes. What! can one never have a little private conversation with you? Must one find you always ready to receive company? And can't you resolve qnly for one moment to suffer yourself to be denied.

Célimène. Would you have me quarrel with him?

Alcestes. You have that regard for people, which by no means is agreeable to me.

Célimène. He's a man would never forgive me, should he know that his visits had been troublesome to me.

Alcestes. And what signifies that to you, to plague yourself in this manner—

Célimène. Lack-a-day! the goodwill of such as he, is of

importance, and these are a sort of people, who have, I don't know how, usurped the privilege of talking loud at court. One sees they introduce themselves into all conversations; they can do you no good, but they may do you harm; and whatever support one may have besides, one should never embroil one's self with these very noisy fellows.

Alcestes. In short, be the matter as it will, and whatever foundation one goes upon, you always find reasons to entertain all the world; and the precautions of your judgment—

SCENE IV

Alcestes, Célimène, Basque.

Basque. Here's Clitander too, madam.

Alcestes. Mighty right.

Célimène. Whither d'ye run?

Alcestes. Out o' doors.

Célimène. Stay.

Alcestes. What for?

Célimène. Stay.

Alcestes. I can't.

Célimène. I would have you.

Alcestes. I won't. These conversations do nothing but weary me, and 'tis unreasonable to desire me to endure 'em.

Célimène. I say you shall, you shall.

Alcestes. No, 'tis impossible for me.

Célimène. Well, go, begone, you are at your full liberty.

SCENE V

Eliante, Philintes, Acastes, Clitander, Alcestes, Célimène, Basque.

Eliante. [To *Célimène.*] Here are the two marquises a-coming up with us: did anybody tell you of it?

Célimène. Yes; chairs here for everybody. [To *Alcestes.*] What, aren't you gone?

Alcestes. No; but I'm resolved, madam, to make you explain your mind, either for them, or for me.

Célimène. Hold your tongue.

Alcestes. You shall explain yourself this very day.

Célimène. You're out o' your wits.

Alcestes. No, you shall declare yourself.

Célimène. Nay—

Alcestes. You must take one side, or t'other.

Célimène. You jest, sure.

Alcestes. No, but you must make your choice, I've had patience too long.

Clitander. Egad, madam, I'm just come from court, where Cleontes appeared at the levee most ridiculously finished out. Has he ne'er a friend to give him the light of a little charitable advice upon his behaviour.

Célimène. To say the truth, he loses himself strangely in the world; he carries an air with him wherever he goes, that immediately strikes the eye; and when one sees him again, after a short absence, one still finds him more full of his extravagances.

Acastes. Egad, if you must talk of extravagant people, I've just now been teased by a most tedious one; that reasoner Damon who kept me, an't please ye, a full hour out o' my chaise, in the heat of the sun.

Célimène. 'Tis a strange tittle-tattle, and then he has always the art, with a great deal of discourse, of saying nothing to you. There's never anything in the arguments he holds, and all we hear is nothing but noise.

Eliante. [To *Philintes*.] This is no bad beginning. The conversation takes a fine turn enough against one's neighbour.

Clitander. Timantes too, is an admirable character, madam!

Célimène. 'Tis a mortal, from head to foot, entirely a mystery, who casts a wild glance upon you in passing, and is always busy without anything to do. Everything he utters abounds with grimace: he quite oppresses you by force o' ceremony; he has ever, to break off the conversation, a secret to whisper to you, and that secret is—nothing; he makes a miracle of the least trifile, and speaks everything in your ear, even to a good-morrow.

Acastes. And Gerald, madam?

Célimène. O the tedious romancer! He never descends below his grand air of a lord, he's perpetually mingling himself with the highest company, and never cites ye anything less than a duke, a prince or princess. Quality perfectly turns his head, and all his discourse turns upon nothing but horses, equipage, and dogs; he thou's and thee's people of highest rank, when he speaks to 'em, and the name of Sir is quite obsolete with him.

Clitander. They tell you that he is all in all with Belisa.

Célimène. Poor-spirited wretch! and the driest company! I suffer martyrdom when she comes to visit me. One must sweat perpetually to find out what to say to her, and the barrenness of her expression lets the conversation die at every turn. In

vain do you call in the aid of all your commonplace stuff, to attack her stupid silence; the fine weather, and the rain, and the cold, and the heat, are funds that one presently drains with her. At the same time, her visits, insupportable enough of 'emselves, are drawn out also to a hideous length; and one may ask what's-a-clock, and yawn twenty times, yet no more will she stir than if she were a log of wood.

Acastes. What think ye of Adrastus?

Célimène. Oh! pride to extremity! a man puffed up with the love of himself; his merit is never satisfied with the court, he makes a daily trade of railing at it, and there's not an employment, charge, or benefice they give away, without doing injustice to the considerable person he fancies himself to be.

Clitander. But the young Cleon, whom all the people of fashion now visit, what say you of him?

Célimène. That he has gained his merit from his cook, and 'tis his table that people pay their visits to.

Eliante. He takes care to have the most delicate of provisions served there.

Célimène. Yes, but I should be very glad he would not serve himself up there; that same stupid person of his is a villainous dish, and it spoils, to my taste, all the entertainment he gives you.

Philintes. His uncle Damis is generally very much esteemed; what say you of him, madam?

Célimène. Oh! he's one of my friends.

Philintes. I take him to be a worthy man, and of good sense enough in appearance.

Célimène. Yes—but, what makes me mad is, he will needs have too much wit; he's ever upon the high strain; and one sees him labouring to be witty in everything he says. Since he took it into his head to be that clever man, nothing can hit his taste, he's so difficult; he will needs see faults in everything one writes; and thinks that to praise is not to be a man of wit; that it is learned to find fault, and that it only belongs to fools to admire and to laugh; and that in not approving any of the works of the age, he gives himself a superiority to all other people. Even in conversation he finds something to carp at, the discourse is too low for him to condescend to; and with his arms across, he looks down with pity from the height of his genius, upon all that everybody says.

Acastes. A true portrait of him, split me.

Clitander. [To *Célimène.*] You have an admirable hand at painting people to the life.

Alcestes. Courage, steady, on my brave friends of the court, you spare nothing, and every one has his turn. In the meantime, let but any one of these persons appear, and we shall see you run hastily to meet him, give him your hand, and with a flattering kiss back it with oaths, that you are his humble servant.

Clitander. Why do you apply yourself to us? If what is said offends you, the charge must be directed to the lady.

Alcestes. No, s'death, 'tis to you; and your fawning laughs draw from her all these slanderous reflections; her satirical humour is constantly fed by the criminal incense of your flattery; her mind would find fewer charms in raillery, had she observed that people did not applaud it. Thus 'tis to flatterers, that one ought everywhere to impute the vices that overspread human nature.

Philintes. But why so greatly interested for these people, you who would yourself condemn what is blamed in 'em?

Célimène. And must not the gentleman contradict, indeed? would you have him confine himself to the common opinion? And not display in all places the contradicting spirit that Heaven has blest him with? The sentiment of another can never please him, he always takes the contrary opinion in hand, and he would think he had the appearance of a common person, should he be observed to be of anybody's opinion but his own. The honour of contradiction has such charms with him, that he very frequently takes up arms against himself; and falls foul on his own sentiments, as soon as ever he discovers 'em in the mouth of another.

Alcestes. The laughers are on your side, madam, that's saying everything; and you may push your satire as far as you please against me.

Philintes. But 'tis very true too, that your way is to bluster at everything one says; and by a peevishness, which itself avows, can neither bear that one should blame or praise.

Alcestes. S'death, 'tis because men are never in the right, because being peevish with 'em is always in season, and because I see that in all affairs they praise impertinently, or censure rashly.

Célimène. But—

Alcestes. No, madam, no, though I were to die for 't, you have diversions that I can't bear with; and they are in the wrong here to cherish in your mind that strong adherence to faults which they themselves blame in you.

Clitander. For my part, I don't know; but I loudly declare I always thought hitherto that the lady was without fault.

Acastes. With graces and attractions I see her well set, but for faults, they don't fall under my observation.

Alcestes. But they do under mine, and so far am I from concealing 'em, she knows I take care to reproach her with 'em. The more we love any person, the less we should flatter them; true love shows itself by giving no quarter; and for my part, I would banish all those mean-spirited lovers, whom I found submissive to all my sentiments, and whose faint-hearted complaisance would offer incense to all my extravagances.

Célimène. In short, were you to be umpire of hearts, to be rightly in love, one ought to renounce all tenderness; and to place the supreme honour of a perfect passion in railing handsomely at the persons we love.

Eliante. Love, for the generality, is but little regulated by these rules, and lovers are always observed to extol their choice. Never does their passion see anything to be blamed in it, and everything to them becomes amiable in the object beloved; they reckon blemishes as perfections, and know how to give favourable names to 'em. The pale vies with the jessamy in fairness, the black, even to a frightful degree, is an adorable brunette; the lean has shape and easiness; the fat has a portliness full of majesty; the naturally slattern who has few charms, is placed under the name of a negligent beauty; the giant is a goddess in their eyes; the dwarf an epitome of all Heaven's wonders; the haughty has a soul worthy of a diadem; the cheat has wit; the fool is all good nature; the over-talkative has agreeable humour; and the dumb preserves a decent modesty. 'Tis thus that a lover, in the extremity of his passion, loves even the very faults of those he is enamoured with.

Alcestes. And, for my part, I maintain—

Célimène. Let's drop this discourse, and take a turn or two in the gallery. What! are you going, gentlemen?

Clitander and Acastes. No, madam.

Alcestes. You are mightily taken up with the fear of their going; go when you please, gentlemen; but I give you notice that I shan't go hence till you are gone.

Acastes. Did I not think I should be troublesome to the lady, I have nothing to call me bence the whole day.

Clitander. As for me, provided I am but soon enough to attend the king at his going to bed, I have no affair else to engage me.

Célimène. [To *Alcestes.*] You only joke, I fancy.

Alcestes. No, not in the least. We shall see whether I am the person you want to have gone.

THE MAN-HATER

[ACT II]

SCENE VI

Alcestes, Célimène, Eliante, Acastes, Philintes, Clitander, Basque.

Basque. [To *Alcestes*.] Sir, here's a man wants to speak with you about an affair which he says will admit of no delay.

Alcestes. Tell him, I have no such urgent affairs.

Basque. He has a jacket on with large plaited skirts, laced with gold lace.

Célimène. [To *Alcestes*.] Go see what he wants, or bid him come in.

SCENE VII

Alcestes, Célimène, Eliante, Acastes, Philintes, Clitander, a Guard.

Alcestes. [Going up to the Guard.] Well then, what's your pleasure? come hither, sir.

Guard. Sir, I want to speak a word or two with you.

Alcestes. You may speak aloud, sir, to let me know what it is.

Guard. The marshals of France, whose commands I am charged with, order you, sir, to come and appear before them immediately.

Alcestes. Who? me, sir?

Guard. Yourself, sir.

Alcestes. And what for?

Philintes. [To *Alcestes*.] 'Tis the ridiculous affair between you and Orontes.

Célimène. [To *Philintes*.] How?

Philintes. Orontes and he affronted one another just now about some trifling verses he did not approve of, and they want to quash the thing in its infancy.

Alcestes. I shall never show any base compliance.

Philintes. But you must obey order, come, get ready—

Alcestes. What accommodation would they propose between us? Shall the vote of these gentlemen condemn me to approve the verses which are the occasion of our quarrel? I won't unsay what I have said; I think 'em villainous.

Philintes. But you should with more temper—

Alcestes. I shan't abate an ace of it, the verses are execrable.

Philintes. You should show yourself tractable in your sentiments. Come, let's away.

Alcestes. I'll go, but nothing shall prevail upon me to retract.

Philintes. Come, we shall show you.

Alcestes. Unless an express command comes from the king, for me to approve the verses, about which there's such a bustle, egad, I shall ever maintain that they are wretched, and that a man deserves hanging for having made 'em. [To *Clitander* and *Acastes* who laugh.] S'heart, gentlemen, I did not think to be so diverting as I am.

Célimène. Go quickly, and make your appearance where you ought to do.

Alcestes. I am going thither, madam, and I shall return hither immediately to decide our debates.

ACT III

SCENE I

Clitander, Acastes.

Clitander. Dear marquis, I see thou art absolutely at ease, everything makes thee gay, and nothing discomposes thee. Dost thou think i' good faith, if thou hast not lost thy eyesight, that thou hast any mighty reason to appear so joyful?

Acastes. Egad, I don't see when I examine myself, where I can pick out any reason to be melancholy. I have a fortune, I'm young and spring from a family, which with some reason may style itself noble; and I think, by the rank my extraction gives me, that there are very few employments which I don't stand fair for; as to courage, which we ought to value above everything, the world knows without vanity, that I don't want it; and the world has seen me push an affair in life, after a vigorous and gallant manner enough. For wit, doubtless I have it, with a good taste too, to judge and reason upon everything without study; to make a learned figure in the playhouse when anything new comes out which I am fond of to idolatry, to decide there in chief, and set the whole house in an uproar at all the fine passages that deserve a clap. I'm adroit enough, I've a good air, a good mien, above all a handsome set of teeth, and a very fine shape. As to dressing well, I think, without flattering myself, he would be very unlucky who should dispute it with me. I am in great esteem, as great as a man can be, beloved by the fair sex, and well with my prince. I do think that with all this, my dear marquis, I do verily think a man

might rest mighty well satisfied with himself in any country of the world.

Clitander. Yes, but finding conquests so easy elsewhere, why do you sigh here to no purpose?

Acastes. I? 'fore gad I'm not of the make, nor humour to endure the indifference of a fine lady. 'Tis enough for awkward people, for vulgar merit, to burn with constancy for your severe beauties; to languish at their feet, and be passive under their cruelty, to seek relief from sighs and tears, and endeavour by dancing a careful long attendance, to obtain what is denied to their merit. But people of my air, marquis, are not made to love upon credit, and be at the whole expense. How extraordinary soever the merit of the fair may be, I'm of opinion, thank Heaven, that we have our value as well as they, and that 'tis not reason sufficient to be honoured with a heart like mine, that it costs 'em nothing; and, at least to place everything in its just balance, 'tis fitting advances ought to be made at a common expense.

Clitander. 'Tis therefore thy opinion, marquis, that thou art very well here!

Acastes. I have some room, marquis, to think so.

Clitander. Believe me, and ha' done with that extreme mistake; you flatter yourself, my dear, and put out your own eyes.

Acastes. 'Tis true, I flatter myself, really I do put out my own eyes.

Clitander. But who makes you judge yourself so perfectly happy?

Acastes. I flatter myself.

Clitander. What d'ye found your conjectures upon?

Acastes. I do put out my own eyes.

Clitander. Have you pretty sure proofs of it?

Acastes. I impose upon myself, I tell you.

Clitander. May Célimène have made any secret acknowledgment of her passion?

Acastes. No, I am cruelly used.

Clitander. Prithee, answer me.

Acastes. I meet with nothing but rebuffs.

Clitander. Ha' done with this raillery, and tell me what hopes she may have given you.

Acastes. I am the wretch, and thou the fortunate man; she has an utter aversion to my person, and I must hang myself some o' these days.

Clitander. Come on then, are you willing, marquis, that, to adjust our love affairs, we should both unanimously determine upon one thing? That he who can show a certain mark of having the greater share in Célimène's heart, the other shall here give place to the pretended conqueror, and set him free from a continual rival?

Acastes. Egad, this is a language exactly to my taste, and I do from the bottom of my heart agree to it. But hush.

SCENE II

Célimène, Acastes, Clitander.

Célimène. Here still?

Clitander. Love, madam, detains us.

Célimène. I just now heard a coach enter below, do you know who it is?

Clitander. No.

SCENE III

Célimène, Acastes, Clitander, Basque.

Basque. Arsinoé, madam, is coming up to see you.

Célimène. What would the woman have with me?

Basque. Eliante is there below to entertain her.

Célimène. What's in her head? And who sends for her?

Acastes. She passes in all places for a consummated prude; and the ardour of her zeal—

Célimène. Yes, yes, mere grimace. In her soul she's one of this world, and all her cares are bent to hook in somebody, without being able to compass it. She can't look but with an envious eye upon the professed humble servants, who are followers of any other lady; and her forlorn merit being abandoned by everybody, is perpetually a-raving against the blindness of the age. She endeavours under the sham veil of prudery, to conceal that hideous solitude which one sees in her house; and to save the credit of her feeble charms, she would fix a crime upon everything out of their power. At the same time, a spark would highly please the dame; and she has a sneaking kindness even for Alcestes. The court he pays me is an insult upon her charms; she will have it a kind of robbery that I commit upon her. And her jealous spite, which she hides, with great difficulty, gives underhand a fling against me in all places where she comes. In short, I never saw anything, to my fancy, so stupid, she is to a supreme degree impertinent, and—

SCENE IV

Arsinoé, Célimène, Clitander, Acastes.

Célimène. Hah! What propitious fortune has brought you hither, madam? Sincerely I was in pain about you.

Arsinoé. I come to give you some intelligence which I thought I owed you.

Célimène. Oh! my stars! how glad am I to see you!

[*Exeunt Clitander and Acastes laughing.*]

SCENE V

Arsinoé, Célimène.

Arsinoé. They could not have gone away more apropos.

Célimène. Shall we sit down?

Arsinoé. 'Tis not at all necessary. Friendship, madam, ought, above all, to display itself in those things, which may be of most importance to us. And as nothing can be of greater importance, than honour and decorum, I come to testify the friendship I have for you, by a piece of intelligence which touches your honour. Yesterday I was a-visiting some people of singular virtue, where they turned the subject of the discourse upon you: and there your conduct, madam, with all its mighty show, had the misfortune not to be commended. That crowd o' people, whose visits you admit of, your gallantry, and the rumours it excites, found censurers more than it should have done, and more rigorous than I could have wished. You may well think what side I took. I did everything in my power to defend you; I strongly excused you, on the foot of your intention, and would be bound for the honesty of your mind. But you know there are certain things in life, which one cannot excuse, however desirous one may be to do it. And I was obliged to grant, that the air with which you live did you some injury. That it had but an ill face in the eyes of the world, that there are no stories so ill-natured, but are everywhere raised about it, and that, if you pleased, your whole deportment might give less handle to uncharitable judges. Not that I believe at the bottom your virtue touched; Heaven preserve me from entertaining such a thought! But folks easily give credit to the shadow of a crime, and 'tis not enough for us to live well, as to ourselves. I believe you, madam, to be of too considerate a spirit, not to take in good part this profitable advice, and to attribute it to

the secret motions of a zeal, which gives me a thorough attachment to all your interests.

Célimène. Madam, I have a great many thanks to return you. Such intelligence obliges me: and so far from taking it ill, I design this instant to acknowledge the favour, by a piece of intelligence which touches your honour too; and as I see you discover yourself my friend, by informing me of the reports that people spread about me; I shall in my turn, follow so kind an example, by acquainting you what 'tis people say of you. In a certain place, where I was a-visiting t'other day, I met with some people of most extraordinary merit, who speaking of the true pains a person takes who lives virtuously, turned the conversation, madam, upon you. There your prudery and your violent zeal were not by any means cited as a good model: that affectation of an exterior gravity, your everlasting discourses about wisdom and honour, your grimaces and outcries at the shadow of an indecency, which yet may have all the innocence of an expression only ambiguous. That high esteem you are in with yourself, and the eye of pity you cast upon everybody else: your frequent lectures and keen censures on things that are innocent and pure. All this, madam, if I may speak frankly to you, was blamed by common consent. To what purpose, said they, that modest look, that sage outside, that gives the lie to all the rest? She's exact at her prayers to the utmost punctilio, but she beats her servants, and pays 'em no wages. She makes a show of huge zeal in all places of devotion, but she paints, and wants to appear handsome; she can't bear the sight of anything naked in a picture, but has a mighty love for realities. For my part, I undertook your defence against 'em every one, and positively assured 'em 'twas all scandal; but the whole run of their opinions went against me, and their conclusion was, that you would do well to be less solicitous about the actions of others, and take a little pains about your own. That one ought to look a great while into one's self, before we think of condemning other people; that one should add the weight of an exemplary life to the corrections we pretend to make in our neighbours; and that 'twould be still better to refer ourselves in this business, to those whom Heaven has committed the care of it to. I believe also, madam, you are of too considerate a spirit, not to take in good part this useful intelligence, and to attribute it to the secret motions of a zeal, which gives me a thorough attachment to all your interests.

Arsinoé. Whatever we may be exposed to in our reproofs,

I did not expect, madam, such a reply as this; and I see plainly, by the sharpness there is in it, that my sincere advice has touched you to the quick.

Célimène. Quite the contrary, madam; and if people were but wise, these mutual cautions would be brought more into fashion; they would put an end by this frank treatment of each other, to that great blindness which all are under in respect to themselves. It will be entirely your fault if we do not continue this honest office with the same zeal, and do not take great care to compare notes as to what we hear of each other, you of me, I of you.

Arsinoé. Ah! madam, I can hear nothing of you, 'tis in me, that a great deal is to be found fault with.

Célimène. Madam, one may, I believe, praise or blame everything, and everybody may have their reason according to their age or taste. There is a season for gallantry, and there is one also proper for prudery. One may out of policy choose that, when the glory of our youthful years is faded. That serves to cover some vexatious misfortunes. I don't say but I may, one time or other, follow your steps; age brings about everything; but 'tis not the time, madam, as every one knows, to be a prude at twenty.

Arsinoé. Really you plume yourself upon a very trifling advantage, and make a hideous noise with your age. Whatever mine may be more than yours, 'tis no such mighty matter to value yourself so much upon it; and I can't imagine, madam, why you should put yourself into such a heat, and lash me in the strange manner you do.

Célimène. No more can I imagine, madam, why you are observed to inveigh so bitterly against me in all places; must you be eternally revenging your vexations upon me? And how can I help it if folks won't make love to you? If my person captivates people, and they continue daily to make me those addresses, from which you may wish they would desist, I don't know what to do in this case, and 'tis not my fault. You have a clear stage, and 'tis not I that prevent your having charms to attract them.

Arsinoé. Alas! And do ye think I give myself any pain about the number of lovers, which you are so vain of? And is it not very easy to judge at what price one may engage 'em nowadays? D'ye think to make one believe, as we see how things go, that your merit alone draws this crowd together? That they only burn for you with an honour-

able passion, and that they all make court to you on the score of your virtue? People are not blinded by vain pretences, the world is no dupe, and I see people who are formed with the power of inspiring tender sentiments, who nevertheless don't gather sparks to their houses: from thence we may draw consequences, that one does not win their hearts without great advances; that nobody is our admirer only for the beauty of our eyes, and that we must pay for the court that's made to us. Therefore don't puff yourself up so much with glory for the trifling tinsel of a poor victory: correct a little the pride of your charms, and don't treat people with contempt on that account. Should our eyes envy yours their conquests, I fancy we might do as other people do, be under no restraint, and let you plainly see, that one has lovers, when one has a mind to have 'em.

Célimène. Have 'em then, madam, and let's see this affair; labour hard by this extraordinary secret to please: and without—

Arsinoé. Let us break off this kind of conversation, madam, it would transport both your temper and mine too far: and I should have already taken my leave, as I ought to do, had not my coach obliged me to wait longer.

Célimène. You are at liberty to stay, madam, as long as you please, and nothing should hurry you on that account: but, without fatiguing you with ceremony to me, I am going to give you better company; and this gentleman whom chance has brought hither apropos, will better supply my place in entertaining you.

SCENE VI

Alceste, Célimène, Arsinoé.

Célimène. Alceste, I must go write a line or two of a letter, which I can defer no longer without doing myself an injury: please to stay with the lady, she will easily be so good as to excuse my incivility.

SCENE VII

Alceste, Arsinoé.

Arsinoé. You see she desires I would entertain you, whilst I wait a moment till my coach comes; and never could all her care offer me anything more charming than such a conversation. Indeed persons of sublime merit attract the love and

esteem of everybody: and doubtless yours has hidden charms that influence my heart so as to enter into all your interests. I wish the court, by a propitious regard, would do more justice to your worth. You have reason to complain, and I am out of all patience, when I daily see that they don't do anything for you.

Alcestes. Me, madam? and what pretensions have I to anything? what service have I done the state? What have I done, pray, so illustrious in itself, that I should complain of the court, that they do nothing for me?

Arsinoé. All those on whom the court casts a propitious eye, have not always performed such famous services; there must be opportunity as well as power; and in short the merit you discover, ought—

Alcestes. Lack-a-day! No more of my merit, for goodness' sake; what are you for having the court perplex itself about? It would have enough to do, and a plaguy deal o' care upon its hands, to have people's merit to bring to light.

Arsinoé. Illustrious merit brings itself to light; yours is extremely valued in many places, and you may take it from me, that in two considerable places you were yesterday extolled by people of great consequence.

Alcestes. Why, madam, all the world are made fools of nowadays, and there's nothing but what the present age confounds by that means; every man has equally great merit bestowed upon him, 'tis no longer an honour to be praised; one's sick o' panegyrics, and throws 'em back in people's faces, even my valet de chambre is put into the gazette.

Arsinoé. For my part, I could heartily wish, the better to show yourself, that an employment at court could allure you. Would you but discover the least inclination that way, one may set many engines at work to serve you, and I have persons at beck whom I'll employ for you, who can make your way easy to everything.

Alcestes. And what would you have me do there, madam? The humour I am of requires me to banish myself thence; Heaven, when it sent me into the world, never made me a soul compatible with the air of a court. I don't find in myself the virtues necessary to succeed well, and make my fortune there. My chief talent is to be frank and sincere, I don't know how to cajole people in conversation; and he who has not the gift of concealing his thoughts, ought to make but a very short stay in that country. Out of a court, one has not that interest,

doubtless, and those titles of honour, which it gives at present; but at the same time, in losing these advantages, one has not the vexation of acting very scurvy parts. One has not a thousand cruel rebuffs to suffer, one has not Mr. Such-a-one's verses to praise, nor my Lady Such-a-one to flatter, nor to bear with the skull of a true marquis.

Arsinoé. Let us drop this discourse of a court, since you are so pleased; but I must pity you in your amour, and that you may have my thoughts on that subject, I could heartily wish your affections were better placed: you deserve, without doubt, a much happier fate, and she whom you are charmed with is unworthy of you.

Alcestes. But pray, madam, consider, when you say so, that this person is your friend.

Arsinoé. Yes; but it really goes against my conscience, to suffer any longer the wrong she does you; the situation I see you in, gives me too sensible an affliction, and I give you notice that you are abused in your love.

Alcestes. 'Tis discovering a great tenderness for me, madam, and such intelligence is obliging to a lover.

Arsinoé. Yes, for all she is my friend, she is, and I say she is unworthy to enslave the heart of a man of honour: and that hers entertains no more than a dissembled kindness for you.

Alcestes. That may be, madam, one cannot see through people's hearts; but your charity might well have forbore throwing such a suspicion into mine.

Arsinoé. If you won't be undeceived, I shall e'en say no more to you, that's easy enough.

Alcestes. No, but on such a subject as this, whatever you expose us to, doubts are of all things the most tormenting: and for my part, I should be glad you would inform me of nothing but what you can plainly make appear to me.

Arsinoé. Well, enough is said, and you are going to receive full light into this matter. Yes, I am willing your eyes should convince you of everything, only give me your hand as far as my house. There I shall let you see a faithful proof of the infidelity of your fair one's heart: and if yours can be smitten with any other eyes, one may, perhaps, offer you something to give you consolation.

ACT IV

SCENE I

Eliante, Philintes.

Philintes. No, never was there a soul seen of so obstinate a make, nor an accommodation more difficult to be brought about; in vain did they endeavour to wind and turn him all ways, there was no drawing him from his opinion, and, in my thoughts, never did so whimsical a difference employ the prudence of these gentlemen. No, gentlemen, said he, I won't retract, and shall agree to anything, barring this point. What is he affronted at? And what would he have me say? What is it over with him as to honour, if he can't write well? What harm did my advice do him, which he took so heinously? One may be a worthy man and write bad verses; these affairs touch not at all upon the point of honour. I esteem him a gallant man in all respects, a man of quality, of merit, and courage, everything you please, but he's a very bad author. I'll praise, if you please, his train and his expense, his skill in horsemanship, in arms, in dancing. But for commanding his verses, I am his humble servant; and when one has not the happiness to write well in that way, one should have no itch after rhyming, on pain of being cast for one's life. In short, all the favour and agreement that he could, with the utmost efforts, bring himself to stoop to, was to say (thinking to soften his style greatly), Sir, I am sorry I am so difficult to please; and out of respect to you, I could have wished with all my soul, to have thought your late song better: and to conclude, they obliged 'em to close the whole proceeding in an embrace.

Eliante. He is very singular in his way of acting, but I have, I own it, a particular value for him: and the sincerity he piques himself upon, has something noble and heroic in it. 'Tis a virtue very rare in this present age, and I could wish to see it in everybody as it is in him.

Philintes. For my part, the more I see him the more am I astonished at this passion he so abandons himself to. Being of the humour Heaven has formed him with, I can't imagine how he takes it into his head to be in love; and less still can I imagine how your cousin should be the person his fancy inclines him to.

Eliante. This lets us sufficiently see, that love is not always

the product of a resemblance of humours; and in this example all those accounts of tender sympathies are falsified.

Philintes. But d'ye think, by what appears, that she loves him?

Eliante. That's a point not very easy to be known. How can one judge whether she loves him in reality? That heart of hers is not, even itself, very sure what it thinks; it loves sometimes without knowing very well why, and fancies too at other times, that it loves when there is nothing in't.

Philintes. I believe our friend will find more vexation with this cousin o' yours than he imagines; and to say the truth, had he my heart, he would turn his addresses quite to another quarter; and we should see him, madam, by a choice much more just, make his use of the kindness you discover for him.

Eliante. For my part, I use no disguise in the matter, and I think one should be sincere in these points. I don't oppose his passion at all, on the contrary I interest myself in it: and if the thing stuck only at me, I myself, the world should see, would join him to her he loves: but if in such a choice, as it possibly may happen, his passion should try its fate another way, and it must be so that he should make somebody else happy, I could resolve upon receiving his addresses; and his being refused in such an affair, would not create in me any aversion to him.

Philintes. And I, madam, on my part, do not at all oppose that kindness your beauty entertains for him: and he himself, if he please, can fully acquaint you with what I have taken care to tell him upon this subject. But if by their being united in marriage, you should be out of a capacity of receiving his addresses, all mine should attempt that glorious favour, which with so much goodness you present him with. Happy, madam, if when your heart can withdraw itself from him, it might but fall to my share.

Eliante. You are pleased to be merry, Philintes.

Philintes. No, madam, I speak now from the bottom of my soul; I wait the occasion of making you an offer without reserve, and with all my wishes impatiently wait for that moment.

SCENE II

Alcestes, Eliante, Philintes.

Alcestes. Ah! madam, do me justice, for an offence which has just now triumphed over all my constancy.

Eliante. What's the matter? what has disturbed you?

Alcestes. Something ails me, which 'tis death to think of; and the dissolution of all nature had not oppressed me like this adventure. 'Tis over with me—my love—I can't speak.

Eliante. Endeavour to recover your spirits a little.

Alcestes. O just Heaven! must the odious vices of the basest minds be joined to so many charms?

Eliante. But pray who can—

Alcestes. Ah! all is ruined, I am, I am betrayed, I am murdered. Célimène—could one have believed this news? Célimène deceives me, and is no better than a faithless wretch.

Eliante. Have you just grounds to believe it?

Philintes. Perhaps 'tis a suspicion lightly conceived; your jealous temper sometimes takes chimeras—

Alcestes. Oh! s'death, sir, meddle you with your own affairs. [To *Eliante.*] 'Tis being but too certain of her treachery, to have a letter in my pocket under her own hand. Yes, madam, a letter writ to Orontes, has set before my eyes my disgrace, and her shame. Orontes, whose addresses I thought she avoided, and whom I dreaded the least of all my rivals.

Philintes. A letter may deceive us by appearance: and is not so culpable sometimes, as one thinks it.

Alcestes. Once more, sir, pray leave me, and trouble yourself only about your own concerns.

Eliante. You should moderate your passion, and the injury—

Alcestes. This work, madam, belongs to you, 'tis to you that my heart has now recourse for power to free itself from this galling affliction. Revenge me of your ungrateful and perfidious relation, who basely betrays so constant a passion; revenge me for this stroke which ought to raise your horror.

Eliante. I revenge you! How?

Alcestes. In receiving my heart. Accept it, madam, in room of the faithless creature, 'tis that way I can take vengeance on her: and I will punish her by the sincere addresses, by the profound love, the respectful concern, the earnest devoirs, and the assiduous service, which this heart shall offer you as an ardent sacrifice.

Eliante. I sympathise with you, doubtless, in what you suffer, and don't despise the heart you offer me; but perhaps the harm is not so great as you think it, and you may lay aside this desire of vengeance; when the injury proceeds from an object full of charms, one forms many designs one never executes.

In vain do we see powerful reason to part, the beloved criminal is presently innocent; all the harm we wish easily vanishes, and 'tis very well known what the anger of a lover is.

Alcestes. No, no, madam, no. The crime is mortal, there's no return, and I absolutely break with her; nothing shall change the resolution I have fixed of doing it, and I should be my own tormentor, ever to love her more. Here she is; my passion doubles at her approach. I'll go reproach her in the most lively manner for her black ingratitude, absolutely confound her, and after that bring you back a heart entirely disengaged from her delusive charms.

SCENE III

Célimène, Alcestes.

Alcestes. [Aside.] Oh Heaven! can I be now master of my transports?

Célimène. [Aside.] Hey, hey! *[To Alcestes.]* What confusion is this you are in? What means that sighing, and those gloomy looks you cast upon me?

Alcestes. That all the horrors a soul is capable of, have nothing in them comparable to your perfidies; that fate, devils, and incensed Heaven never produced anything so wicked as yourself.

Célimène. This is certainly an admirable way of courtship.

Alcestes. Nay, none of your jests, 'tis no time to laugh; much rather blush, you have reason for it. I have sure proofs of your treachery. This is what the perplexities of my heart had pointed out; 'twas not in vain that my affection was alarmed. By those frequent suspicions, which you abhorred, I searched after the misfortune my eyes have hit upon; and in spite of all your caution and address in dissimulation, my genius hinted to me what I had to fear; but don't presume that I shall endure the vexation of seeing myself outrageously abused, without being revenged. I know that one has no power over one's inclinations, that love will always spring up independent; that one can never take possession of a heart by force, and that every mind is free to name its conqueror. Accordingly I should have had no reason of complaint, had you explained to me without dissimulation; and though you had rejected my addresses at the first sight, my heart had had no right of taxing anything but fortune. But to have my passion applauded by a deceitful confession, 'tis a treachery, 'tis a perfidy, which can't meet

with too great a punishment; and I shall give full swing to my resentments. Yes, yes, after such an outrage dread everything that can happen. I am no more myself, I am all rage. Pierced by the mortal wound which you have given me, my senses are no longer under the government of reason; I yield to the motions of a just fury, and shall not answer for what I may do.

Célimène. Whence then, I pray, proceeds such raving? Tell me, have you lost your senses?

Alcestes. Yes, yes, I lost 'em, when on sight of you I imbibed, to my misfortune, the poison which kills me, and when I thought of finding any sincerity in the treacherous charms with which I was enchanted.

Célimène. What treachery then can you complain of?

Alcestes. Oh! the double heart, how well it knows the art of dissimulation! But I have the means ready at hand to drive it to its last shifts; cast your eyes here, and know the strokes of your own pen; the discovery of this letter is sufficient to confound you, and against this evidence you can have nothing to answer.

Célimène. And this is the thing that ruffles your spirits?

Alcestes. Don't you blush at sight of this writing?

Célimène. And for what reason should I blush at it?

Alcestes. How! Do you add assurance to artifice? Will you disown it, because it is not signed?

Célimène. Why disown a letter of my own handwriting?

Alcestes. And can you look upon it without being in confusion at the crime, of which the whole tenor of it accuses you?

Célimène. You are in truth, a most extravagant mortal.

Alcestes. What? Do you thus outbrave this convincing proof? And has that which lets me see your tenderness for Orontes, nothing in it injurious to me, and shameful to you?

Célimène. Orontes! Who told you that the letter is for him?

Alcestes. The persons who this day put it into my hands. But I'm willing to grant that it should be for another; has my heart the less reason to complain of yours? Will you in reality, be less culpable towards me, on that account?

Célimène. But if 'tis a woman this letter is written to, wherein does it hurt you? and what is there culpable in it?

Alcestes. Ha! the turn is good, and the excuse admirable; I was not thinking of this stroke, I own it. And here I am absolutely convicted. Dare you have recourse to these gross impositions? and d'ye think people have lost their eyes? Let's see, let's see a little in what way, with what air, you will support

a falsity so palpable; and how can you misapply all the words of a letter which shows so much passion, to a woman? To cover your want of constancy, adjust what I'm going to read—

Célimène. I've no mind to't. You are very merry to take such command upon you, and to tell me flatly to my face, what you dare to tell me.

Alcestes. No, without being in a passion, take a little pains to justify the terms here.

Célimène. No, I won't do it; and in this accident, whatever you think, is of little importance to me.

Alcestes. Pray, show me, I shall be satisfied, if you can but explain this letter for a woman.

Célimène. No, 'tis for Orontes, and I would have you think so, I receive all his addresses with the greatest joy. I admire his discourse, I esteem his person, and I agree to whatever you please. Do, quarrel, let nothing stop you, and don't torment me any more.

Alcestes. [Aside.] Heavens! Can anything be invented more cruel? And was ever heart treated in this manner? What! Here I am justly in a passion with her, 'tis I come to make my complaints, and I must bear the blame! She aggravates to the last degree my sorrow, and my suspicions; she suffers me to believe everything, and glories in everything; and at the same time, my heart is still cowardly enough, not to break the chain that binds it, not to arm itself with a generous disdain against the ungrateful object it is but too much smitten with! [To *Célimène.*] Ah! perfidious creature! how well you know to make your advantage of my extreme weakness even against myself; and manage to your own ends that prodigious excess of this fatal love which took rise from those traitorous eyes! Clear yourself at least, from the crime which bears too hard upon me, and no longer affect being guilty of it. If it can be done, make me this letter innocent; my fondness consents to lend you a helping hand. Strive to appear true in this case, and I will strive to believe you such.

Célimène. Go, you are a fool with your jealous transports, and don't deserve the love one has for you. I would know, who could oblige me to descend to the baseness of dissembling with you? And why, if my heart inclined another way, I should not with sincerity tell you so? What! does not the obliging assurance of my sentiments defend me sufficiently against all your suspicions? Are they of any weight against such security? Is it not affronting me to hearken to 'em? And since our heart

makes the utmost effort, when it can resolve to confess it loves; since the honour of the sex, that enemy to love, so strongly opposes such like confessions; should the lover, who sees us get over such an obstacle for his sake, with impunity suspect that oracle? And is it not a crime not to rest secure of that which one cannot declare but after great struggles with one's self? Go, such suspicions deserve my indignation, and you are not worth one's giving one's self any concern about. I am a fool, and am heartily vexed at my simplicity, for still retaining any kindness for you; I ought to fix my esteem somewhere else, and give you just reason to complain of me.

Alcestes. Ah, traitress! How strange is my weakness for you! You certainly deceive me with these tender expressions; but it signifies nothing, I must follow my destiny, my soul's entirely resigned to your fidelity, I must see to the last what your heart will prove; and whether it can form so black a design as to deceive me.

Célimène. No, you don't love me as you ought to love.

Alcestes. Oh! nothing is comparable to the extremity of my passion; and in the zeal I have to show this to all the world, I go so far as to form wishes against you. Yes, I could wish that no person thought you amiable, that you were reduced to a miserable condition, that Heaven at your infancy had bestowed nothing upon you, that you had had neither rank, birth, nor fortune, so that I might, by a more distinguishing sacrifice of my heart, have made you reparation for the injustice of such a fate; and that I might at this time have had the joy and the glory of seeing you receive your all at the hands of my love.

Célimène. This is wishing one well after a strange manner! Preserve me Heaven from your ever having occasion—Here comes Master Du Bois, ridiculously equipped.

SCENE IV

Célimène, Alcestes, Du Bois.

Alcestes. What means this equipage, and this frightful air? What's the matter with you?

Du Bois. Sir—

Alcestes. Well?

Du Bois. Strange things in abundance.

Alcestes. What is it?

Du Bois. We are scurvily situated, sir, in our affairs.

Alcestes. How?

Du Bois. Shall I speak aloud?

Alcestes. Yes, speak quickly.

Du Bois. Isn't there somebody here—

Alcestes. Pooh, what trifling is here! Will you speak?

Du Bois. Sir, you must step aside.

Alcestes. How?

Du Bois. We must decamp without beat o' drum.

Alcestes. And why?

Du Bois. I tell you we must quit this place.

Alcestes. The cause?

Du Bois. We must depart, sir, without taking leave.

Alcestes. But for what reason all this stuff?

Du Bois. By reason, sir, that we must pack and away.

Alcestes. Plague! I shall infallibly crack your skull, rascal, if you don't explain yourself in another manner.

Du Bois. Sir, a fellow with a black dress and phiz, came quite into the kitchen, to leave with us a paper scribbled after such a manner, that a man had need be more cunning than the devil to read it. I make no manner o' doubt; but 'tis about your lawsuit; but Beelzebub himself, I believe, could not find it out.

Alcestes. Well! How! What does this paper discover, traitor, with respect to our departure you spoke of just now?

Du Bois. 'Tis to tell you, sir, as how an hour afterwards, a man who comes often to visit you, came very earnestly to see for you, and not finding you, charged me softly, knowing that I am a very faithful servant, to tell you—stay, what d'ye call his name?

Alcestes. Ha' done with his name, rascal, and tell me what he said to thee.

Du Bois. In short, 'tis one of your friends, and that's sufficient. He told me that 'tis at your peril not to go hence, and that fortune threatens you here with being arrested.

Alcestes. But how? Would he not specify anything t'ye?

Du Bois. No, he asked me for a pen, ink, and paper; and wrote a word or two, by which, I believe, you may come at the knowledge of the bottom of this mystery.

Alcestes. Give it me then.

Célimène. What can there be in this?

Alcestes. I don't know, but I long to be fully let into it. Wilt thou ha' done quickly, thou impertinent villain?

Du Bois. [After having fumbled for it a long while.] Troth, sir, I left it upon your table.

Alceste. I don't know what hinders me—

Célimène. Don't put yourself in a passion, but go and unravel this perplexing business.

Alceste. It seems to me that fortune, take what care I can, has sworn to debar me of your conversation; but to triumph over it, indulge my passion, madam, with one sight of you more, before the day is ended.

ACT V

SCENE I

Alceste, Philinte.

Alceste. My resolution is fixed, I tell you.

Philinte. But, whatever this stroke may be, must it needs oblige you—

Alceste. No, you labour in vain, in vain do you reason with me, nothing can divert me from what I say. Too much perverseness reigns in the age we live in, and I'm resolved to withdraw myself from all human commerce. What! the world sees that honour, probity, modesty, and the laws are all at once against my adversary! People are everywhere crying up the justice of my cause! My mind reposes itself upon the assurance of my right! At the same time I am deceived in the success; I have justice on my side, yet I lose my cause! A scoundrel, whose scandalous history is so well known, comes off triumphant by a most hellish falsehood! All honesty yields to his perfidy! He finds a way of justifying himself, in cutting my throat! The importance of his grimace, wherein is glaring artifice, overthrows all right and perverts justice! He gets a decree of court to crown his villainy; and still not content with the injury they do me, there is got abroad in the world an abominable book, of which even the reading is criminal, a book that deserves the utmost severity, of which the knave has the impudence to make me the author! And upon this Orontes is observed to mutter, and villainously endeavours to support the imposture! He who maintains the rank of an honest man at court, to whom I have nothing but been sincere and frank; who comes to me in spite of me, with an eager forwardness, to demand my opinion of some verses he has made, and because I treat him with

honour, and would neither betray him, nor the truth, he is aiding to oppress me with an imaginary crime! Now is he become my greatest adversary! And I am never heartily to be pardoned, because I did not think his song was a good one! S'death, 'tis after this manner mankind are made! These are the actions to which a sense of glory carries 'em! This is the fidelity, the virtuous zeal, the justice and the honour one finds among 'em. Let's away, 'tis too much to bear the plagues they are devising, let us escape from these savage woods, this cut-throat place; and since among men you live like real wolves, traitors, you shall never have me with you again as long as I live.

Philintes. I apprehend the design you are in to be a good deal too hasty, and the whole mischief is not so great as you make it. What your antagonist has the assurance to impute to you, has not had the credit to occasion your being arrested; his false report we see destroys itself, and 'tis an action which may possibly turn severely upon himself.

Alcestes. Him! He fears not any clamour from such tricks as these, he has a licence to be an avowed villain; and so far will such an adventure as this be from hurting his credit, you'll see him to-morrow in a more flourishing condition.

Philintes. In short, 'tis certain people have not given in too much to the report his malice has spread against you; from this quarter hitherto you have nothing to fear; and as for your law-suit which you may complain about, 'tis easy for you to bring the trial on afresh, and against this sentence—

Alcestes. No, I'll abide by it. However sensible an injury such a sentence may do me, I'll take great care they shall not reverse it; one sees too plainly by this how right is abused; and I would have it remain to posterity, as a notorious mark, a famous testimony of the wickedness of the men of this age. It may indeed cost me about twenty thousand livres, but for twenty thousand livres I shall have a right to rave against the iniquity of human nature, and to nourish an immortal hatred for it.

Philintes. But in short—

Alcestes. But in short your pains are superfluous. What can you say to me, sir, upon this head? Can you possibly have the assurance to excuse to my face the horribleness of all that's transacting?

Philintes. No, I do agree to what you please. Everything goes by cabal, and by pure interest; and 'tis nowadays scarce anything else but craft that carries it, and men should be

otherways disposed. But is their want of justice a reason why we should think of withdrawing from their society? All these human defects give us opportunities in life, of exercising our philosophy. 'Tis the most amiable employment virtue finds; and if every place were full of honesty, and all hearts were frank, just, and docile, the greatest part of our virtues would be useless to us, since the use of 'em is placed in this, in the power of bearing the injustice of another, in respect to our property, without being ruffled. And after the same way that a heart of profound virtue—

Alcestes. I know, sir, that you talk the best in the world. You always abound in fine reasoning, but you lose your time and all your fine discourses. Reason persuades me for my good, to retire; I have not command enough of my tongue, I could not answer for what I might say, and I should run myself into a thousand broils. Let me, without any more words, wait upon Célimène, 'tis proper I have her consent to my design; I shall now see whether she really loves me, and this is the critical moment to convince me of it.

Philintes. Let us go up to Eliante, and wait her coming.

Alcestes. No, my mind is agitated with too much care; go you and see her, and leave me, in short, in this little dusky corner with my gloomy melancholy.

Philintes. That's odd sort o' company to wait for, I'll go prevail upon Eliante to come down.

SCENE II

Célimène, Orontes, Alcestes.

Orontes. Yes, madam, you are to consider, whether by so dear an engagement, you will fix me for ever yours. I must have an absolute certainty of your affections; a lover does not like wavering in such a point as this. If the warmth of my passion has really moved you, you should not by any means scruple letting me see it; and after all, the proof I demand of you, is no more than not to admit of Alcestes' addresses, to sacrifice him, madam, to my love, and in short, from this time forward to banish him your house.

Célimène. But what mighty matter provokes you against him. You whom I have heard speak so much of his merit?

Orontes. There's no need, madam, of these explanations. The matter in hand is to know your sentiments: pray, choose to keep one or t'other, my resolution only waits upon yours.

Alcestes. [Stepping out of the corner whither he had retired.] Yes, the gentleman is right: you must choose, madam, and his demand here agrees with my desire; the same impatience urges me, and the same care calls me, my love must have an infallible mark of yours. Matters can be protracted no longer, this is the moment you are to explain yourself.

Orontes. I would not by any means, sir, disturb your good fortune by an importunate passion.

Alcestes. Jealous, or not jealous, sir, I'll have no share of her heart with you.

Orontes. If she thinks your love preferable to mine—

Alcestes. If she is capable of the least inclination for you

Orontes. I swear henceforward to make no pretensions to her.

Alcestes. I peremptorily swear never to set eyes on her more.

Orontes. Madam, you may speak without constraint.

Alcestes. Madam, you may explain yourself without fear.

Orontes. You have nothing to do, but tell us where your inclinations are fixed.

Alcestes. You have nothing but to cut the matter short, and choose which of us you will.

Orontes. What? do you seem to have any difficulty in such a choice?

Alcestes. What? do you hesitate, and appear uncertain?

Célimène. Good heavens! how unseasonable is this importunity! and how you show yourselves both in the wrong! I can easily determine as to the preference, and 'tis not my heart here that wavers: 'tis not in suspense betwixt you, nor is anything sooner done than to choose what we wish. But to say the truth, I am not a little upon the rack to make a declaration of this kind before you. I think these disobliging speeches should never be spoken in the presence of people. That a heart gives light sufficient in its inclinations, without our being obliged to proceed abruptly to a quarrel; and that 'tis sufficient, in short, that proofs of a milder nature inform a lover of the ill success of his courtship.

Orontes. No, no, I have nothing to fear from a frank confession, I consent to it on my side.

Alcestes. And I demand it; 'tis that I have here the boldness, above all, to insist on and I don't want to see any of your management. Your great study is to keep in with all the world, but no more amusement, no more uncertainty; you must explain yourself clearly upon this affair, otherways I shall take your refusal for a decision. I shall know, for my part, how to

interpret this silence, and shall reckon upon the worst I can think, to be really said.

Orontes. I am obliged to you, sir, for this warmth, and I here say the same thing to her that you do.

Célimène. How you tease me here with this obstinacy! Is there any reason in what you demand? And have I not told you what motive restrains me? I'll be judged by Eliante who comes here.

SCENE III

Eliante, Philintes, Célimène, Orontes, Alcestes.

Célimène. Here am I persecuted, cousin, by people whose humour seems to me to be concerted. They both of 'em, with the same heat, will needs have me declare which of 'em my heart makes choice of; and that by a sentence which I must pronounce to his face, I should forbid one of the two all the application he can make. Tell me whether this is ever done?

Eliante. Don't consult me upon the subject: you may perhaps address yourself to a very wrong person. I am for the people who speak their thoughts.

Orontes. 'Tis in vain, madam, for you to excuse yourself.

Alcestes. All your evasions will be but ill-seconded

Orontes. You must, you must speak, and have done wavering.

Alcestes. You need do no more than continue silent.

Orontes. I desire but one word to end our debates.

Alcestes. And I, for my share, understand you, if you don't speak at all.

SCENE IV

Arsinoé, Célimène, Eliante, Alcestes, Philintes, Acastes, Clitander, Orontes.

Acastes. Madam, we two come, no offence, to clear up a certain trifling affair.

Clitander. [To *Orontes* and *Alcestes*.] You are here very apropos, gentlemen, and you are also concerned in this affair.

Arsinoé. [To *Célimène*.] Madam, you will be surprised at sight of me, but these gentlemen are the occasion of my coming. They came to me, and complained of a trick which it can't enter into my heart to give credit to. I have too high an esteem for the native honesty of your mind, ever to believe you capable of such a crime; my eyes contradicted their strongest

proofs, and my friendship passing by some trifling words we had, I was willing to bear 'em company to your house, to see you clear yourself of this calumny.

Acastes. Yes, madam, let us see, with calmness of spirit, how you will go about to support this; was this letter written by you to Clitander?

Clitander. Did you write this tender epistle to Acastes?

Acastes. [To *Orontes* and *Alcestes*.] Gentlemen, these lines have nothing in them obscure to you, I doubt not but her civility has made you too well acquainted with her hand. But this is well enough worth the trouble of reading.

"You are a strange man, Clitander, to condemn my gaiety, and to reproach me, that I am never so merry, as when I am not with you. There is nothing so unjust; and if you don't come very soon, to ask my pardon for this offence, I'll never pardon it as long as I live. Our clumsy Flemish viscount—"

He should have been here.

"Our clumsy Flemish viscount, with whom you begin your complaints, is a man who can never hit my taste; and since the time I saw him spitting in a pool for full three quarters of an hour, to make circles, I never could have a good opinion of him. As to the little marquis—"

That's myself, gentlemen, without vanity.

"As to the little marquis who held me so long by the hand yesterday, I think there is nothing so diminutive as his whole person; and 'tis one of your gentry of merit, who have nothing but their sword to trust to. As to the man with green ribbons—"

Your turn now, sir.

[To *Alcestes*.

"As to the man with green ribbons, he diverts me sometimes with his blunt ways, and his fantastical peevishness. But there are a thousand occasions when I think him the most troublesome creature in the world. And for the sonnet-monger—"

Now for your packet.

[To *Orontes*.

"And for the sonnet-monger who pushes himself forward for a wit, and will be an author in spite of the world, I cannot take the pains to hearken to what he says; and his prose fatigues me as much as his verse. Persuade yourself, therefore, that I am

not always diverted so well as you imagine; that I find more matter of complaint than I could wish in all the parties I am drawn into; and that the presence of those we love, gives a marvellous relish to the pleasures we enjoy."

Clitander. Now for myself.

"Your Clitander, whom you talk to me of, and who is so much of the affected beau, is the last man I should have a kindness for. He is extravagant in persuading himself one loves him; and you are so in believing one does not love you. To be reasonable therefore, change sentiments with him; and see me as often as you can, to help me bear the trouble of being besieged by him."

We have here the model of a very fine character, madam, and you know what to call it. 'Tis enough, we shall both of us go show this glorious portrait of your heart in all places.

Acastes. I could say a good deal to you, and a fine subject it is; but I don't hold you worthy my anger; and I could let you see, that your little marquises, for their consolation, have hearts of a much higher price.

SCENE V

Célimène, Eliante, Arsinoé, Alcestes, Orontes, Philintes.

Orontes. What! am I thus pulled to pieces after all the things you have written me? And does your heart, adorned with the fair appearances of love, engage itself by turns to all mankind? Go, I was too much a dupe, and shall be so no longer, you do me a favour in letting me know you; I am the richer by a heart which you thus restore to me, and have my revenge in what you lose. [To *Alcestes.*] Sir, I don't know any obstacle there is now to your passion, and you may conclude matters with the lady.

SCENE VI

Célimène, Eliante, Arsinoé, Alcestes, Philintes.

Arsinoé. [To *Célimène.*] This is certainly one of the basest actions in the world, I can be no longer silent, I'm shocked at it. Were there ever any proceedings like yours, madam? I don't enter into the concerns of the rest. [Pointing to *Alcestes.*] But this gentleman, who had fixed your happiness, a man of

merit and honour as he is, and who dotes on you to idolatry, should he—

Alcestes. Pray, madam, leave me to manage my own interests in this affair myself, and don't charge yourself with these superfluous cares. In vain does my heart observe you espouse its quarrel, 'tis not in a condition to requite you for this great zeal; and you are not the person I could think of, should I strive to revenge myself by another choice.

Arsinoé. Umph! Do you fancy, sir, I have any such thought, and that I should be in such a violent hurry to have you? You have a great deal of vanity, I think, in your temper, if you can flatter yourself with such a belief. That lady's refuse is a sort of ware one would be much to blame to be taken with. Pray be undeceived, and carry it less haughtily, people of my condition are not for such as you. You will do well to sigh for her still, and I long to see such a fine match.

SCENE VII

Célimène, Eliante, Alcestes, Philintes.

Alcestes. [To *Célimène.*] Well, in spite of all I see, I have hitherto been silent, and have let all the world speak before me. Have I commanded myself long enough? and may I now—

Célimène. Yes, you may say everything. You are in the right when you complain, and reproach me after any manner you please. I'm to blame. I confess it, and my confused mind does not seek to put you off with any frivolous excuse. I despised the fury of the rest here, but I own my crime in respect to you; certainly your resentment is just, I know how criminal I must appear to you, that everything speaks my unfaithfulness to you, and that in short you have reason to hate me. Do so, I consent to it.

Alcestes. But can I do it, traitress, can I thus get the better of all my fondness? And though I should most ardently wish to hate you, shall I find a heart ready to obey me? [To *Eliante* and *Philintes.*] You see what an unworthy fondness can do, and I make you both witnesses of my weakness. But to confess the truth to you, this is not all yet, you will see me push this matter even to extremity, show you that we are wrongfully styled wise, and that in all hearts there is still something of the man. [To *Célimène.*] Yes, perfidious creature, I am willing

to forget your crimes, and can find in my heart to excuse all your tricks, and cover 'em with the name of a weakness, into which the viciousness of the times has betrayed your youth; provided your heart will second a design I have formed of avoiding all human creatures, and that you are determined to follow me without delay, into my desert, where I have made a vow to live. This is the only way you can in every one's opinion, repair the mischief of your letters, and by which, after this discovery, which a noble mind must abhor, I may be allowed still to love you.

Célimène. I renounce the world before I grow old, and go bury myself in your desert!

Alcestes. And if your flame is answerable to mine, what should all the rest of the world signify to you? Are not your desires satisfied with me?

Célimène. Solitude is frightful to a person of twenty, I don't perceive my soul great, or firm enough to resolve upon undertaking a design of that nature. If giving you my hand can satisfy your wishes, I may resolve to tie the knot, and Hymen—

Alcestes. No, now my heart detests you, and this refusal alone does more than all the rest. Since you are not so far linked in the charming bondage, to find your all in me, as I do in you, go, I discard you, and this sensible affront for ever disengages me from your base tyranny.

SCENE VIII

Eliante, Alcestes, Philintes.

Alcestes. [Speaks to *Eliante*.] A thousand virtues, madam, adorn your beauty, and I never saw anything in you but what was sincere. I have had for this long time an extreme value for you; but allow me ever to esteem you in the same way. And excuse my heart in the variety of its troubles, if it waives the honour of wearing your chains; I am sensible that I am unworthy of them, and begin to find Heaven has not formed me for this union; that the refuse of a heart, which could be of no worth to you, would be too mean an homage for you, and that in short—

Eliante. You may pursue your thought, my hand is under no embarrassment where to bestow itself. And here is your friend, who without giving myself too much uneasiness, might possibly accept it, should I desire it of him.

Philintes. Ah, madam! that honour is my whole ambition, and I could sacrifice my blood and life for it.

Alcestes. That you may taste true contentment, may you ever retain these sentiments each for the other. Betrayed on all sides, oppressed with injustice, I am going to escape a gulf where vice reigns triumphant; and to search out some retired corner of the world, where one may have the liberty to be a man of honour.

Philintes. Come, come, my charmer, let's exhaust our art,
To break this savage purpose of his heart.

THE MOCK-DOCTOR
(A COMEDY)

ACTORS

GÉRONTE, *father to Lucinda.*

LUCINDA, *daughter to Géronte.*

LEANDER, *Lucinda's lover.*

SGANAREL, *husband to Martina, a domestic of Géronte.*

MARTINA, *wife of Sganarel.*

MR. ROBERT, *neighbour to Sganarel.*

VALERE, *domestic of Géronte.*

LUCAS, *husband to Jacqueline.*

JACQUELINE, *nurse at Géronte's, and wife to Lucas.*

THIBAUT, *father to Perrin,* } *peasants.*

PERRIN, *son of Thibaut.*

SCENE: *The Country.*

ACT I

SCENE I

Sganarel, Martina.

Sganarel. No, I tell thee that I will not do't, and that it belongs to me to talk, and to be master.

Martina. And I tell thee, that I'll have thee to live as I please, and that I'm not married to thee to endure thy frolics.

Sganarel. O the monstrous plague of having a wife! How right was Aristotle, when he declared that a wife is worse than a devil!

Martina. Observe a little the notable man, with his block-head of an Aristotle.

Sganarel. Yes, notable man. Find me a faggot-binder, who understands, like me, to reason upon things, who has served for six years a famous physician; and who in his younger days had his accidente by heart.

Martina. Plague on thee for an eternal ass.

Sganarel. Plague on thee for an impudent baggage.

Martina. Cursed be that day and hour wherein I took it into my head to say Yes!

Sganarel. Cursed be the hornified notary who made me sign to my ruin!

Martina. It well becomes you, truly, to complain of that affair. Oughtest thou to be one single moment without thanking Heaven that thou hast me for thy wife? Or didst thou merit such a person as I am?

Sganarel. 'Tis true, that you did me too much honour, and I had room to be satisfied the first night of our nuptials. Hey — s'death, don't make me speak upon that head; I should say certain things—

Martina. What? what would you say?

Sganarel. Enough; let us leave this chapter, it sufficeth that we know what we know, and that you were very lucky in lighting on me.

Martina. Lucky, d'ye call me in lighting on thee? A fellow

who has brought me to an hospital, a sot, a rascal who eats up all that I have.

Sganarel. You lie, I drink part of it.

Martina. Who sells, piece by piece, everything that's in the house.

Sganarel. That's living upon one's means.

Martina. Who has taken my very bed from under me.

Sganarel. You'll rise the earlier.

Martina. Who, in short, has not left a single movable in all the house.

Sganarel. We may move the easier.

Martina. And who from morning to night, does nothing but play and drink.

Sganarel. That's to keep myself from the vapours.

Martina. And what would you have me do the while, with my family?

Sganarel. Whatever you please.

Martina. I have four poor little infants in arms.

Sganarel. Lay 'em on the ground.

Martina. Who are crying to me, every moment for bread.

Sganarel. Give them the rod. When I have drunk well, and eaten well, I'll have every one satisfied in my house.

Martina. And do you mean, sot, that things shall always go so?

Sganarel. Wife, let us proceed softly, if you please.

Martina. That I shall perpetually endure your insolences and debaucheries.

Sganarel. Don't let us put ourselves in a passion, wife.

Martina. And that I shall never be able to find a way of bringing you to your duty.

Sganarel. You know, wife, that I have not a very passive spirit of my own, and that I have an arm sufficiently strong.

Martina. I laugh at your threats.

Sganarel. My pretty little wife, my honey, your hide itches according to custom.

Martina. I'll let you see, that I'm no ways afraid of you.

Sganarel. My dear rib, you have a desire to force something from me.

Martina. D'ye think that I fear your words?

Sganarel. Sweet object of my vows, I shall cuff your ears.

Martina. Sot, as thou art!

Sganarel. I shall bang you.

Martina. Wine-sack!

Sganarel. I shall belabour you.

Martina. Scoundrel!

Sganarel. I shall curry you.

Martina. Rascal, impudence, knave, coward, villain, hang-dog, mumper, rogue, pickpocket, varlet, thief——

Sganarel. Um——you will have it then?

[*Sganarel taking a cudgel and beating her.*

Martina. [Crying.] Oh! oh! oh! oh!

Sganarel. This is the true method to make you quiet.

SCENE II

Mr. Robert, Sganarel, Martina.

Mr. Robert. Hoity, hoity, hoity; fie, what's here to do? What a base trick is this! Plague on the scoundrel for beating his wife thus.

Martina. [To *Mr. Robert.*] I have a mind that he should beat me.

Mr. Robert. Nay then I agree to it with all my heart.

Martina. What do you meddle for?

Mr. Robert. I was in the wrong.

Martina. Is it your business?

Mr. Robert. You say right.

Martina. Observe this impertinent mortal a little, who would hinder husbands from beating their wives!

Mr. Robert. I recant.

Martina. What have you to do to pry into it?

Mr. Robert. Nothing.

Martina. Does it belong to you to run your nose into it?

Mr. Robert. No.

Martina. Concern yourself with your own business.

Mr. Robert. I say no more.

Martina. I have a mind to be beaten.

Mr. Robert. Agreed.

Martina. 'Tisn't at your expense.

Mr. Robert. True.

Martina. And you are a sot to come thrusting in your oar where you have nothing to do. [Gives him a blow.

Mr. Robert. [To *Sganarel.*] Neighbour, I ask your pardon with all my heart. Go on, thrash, bang your wife as you should; I'll help you if you will.

Sganarel. I have not a mind to't.

Mr. Robert. Nay, that's another thing.

Sganarel. I will beat her if I will; and if I won't, I won't beat her.

Mr. Robert. Mighty well.

Sganarel. 'Tis my wife, and not yours.

Mr. Robert. Undoubtedly.

Sganarel. You have no business to command me.

Mr. Robert. Right.

Sganarel. I have nothing to do with your help.

Mr. Robert. With all my heart.

Sganarel. And you are an impertinent fellow to intrude into other people's affairs. Learn what Cicero says, That between the tree and the finger you must not thrust in the bark.

[Beats *Mr. Robert*, and drives him off.]

SCENE III

Sganarel, Martina.

Sganarel. So, come, let us be at peace with one another. Here, shake hands.

Martina. Yes, after you have beat me in this manner?

Sganarel. That's nothing. Shake hands.

Martina. I won't.

Sganarel. Hey!

Martina. No.

Sganarel. Sweet wife.

Martina. No.

Sganarel. Come, I tell thee.

Martina. I won't do't.

Sganarel. Come, come, come.

Martina. No, I'll be in a passion.

Sganarel. Fie, 'tis a trifle. Come, come.

Martina. Let me alone.

Sganarel. Shake hands, I say.

Martina. You have used me too ill.

Sganarel. Well, go, I ask your pardon, let's see thy hand.

Martina. I forgive thee. [Aside.] But thou shalt pay for't.

Sganarel. You are a fool to regard that; these are trifling things, which are often necessary in friendship, and five or six strokes of a cudgel amongst people who love one another, only serve to whet the affection. Go, I'll be gone to the wood, and I promise thee above a hundred faggots to-day.

SCENE IV

Martina. [Alone.] Get thee gone, whatever face I put on't, I shall not forget my resentment, and I'm all on fire to find means of punishing thee for the blows thou hast given me. I know well enough that a woman has always about her wherewithal to be revenged of a husband. But that's too delicate a punishment for my hangdog. I want a revenge that he would feel a little better; for this is not sufficient for the injury I've received.

SCENE V

Valere, Lucas, Martina.

Lucas. [To *Valere*, not seeing *Martina*.] I'facks we have taken the deuce of a commission on us, and I don't know, for my part, what we could think of getting by't.

Valere. [To *Lucas*, not seeing *Martina*.] What wouldest thou have, my honest man-nurse? We must obey our master; besides, we have both of us an interest in the health of our mistress his daughter, for her marriage, which is delayed by her disease, would without doubt bring us in a reward. Horatio, who is a generous man, has the best pretension to her person; and though she has discovered a kindness for one Leander, you know well enough that her father would never consent to receive him for his son-in-law.

Martina. [Musing aside, thinking she's alone.] Can't I find out some device to revenge myself?

Lucas. [To *Valere*.] But what an a whim is this that's gotten into his head, since the doctors have all lost their Latin in the affair?

Valere. [To *Lucas*.] One sometimes finds by dint of searching what could not be found at first; and very often in simple places—

Martina. Yes, I must be revenged at any rate whatever; these strokes of the cudgel rise in my stomach, I can't digest them, and—[Running against *Valere* and *Lucas*.] Oh! gentlemen, I ask your pardon, I did not see you, for I was puzzling my brains for something that perplexes me.

Valere. Every one has their cares in this world. And we are likewise looking for what we gladly would find.

Martina. May it be anything that I can assist you in?

Valere. Perhaps it may: we want to meet with some able man, some particular doctor, who might give some relief to our

master's daughter, that's seized with a distemper which has quite and clean taken away the use of her tongue. A great many physicians have already spent all their art upon her; but one sometimes finds folks with wonderful secrets, certain peculiar remedies, which very often do what the others could not do, and 'tis this we are looking for.

Martina. [Aside.] Ha! My stars have inspired me with an admirable invention to revenge myself on my rascal! [To them.] You could never have applied yourselves better to meet with what you want, for we have a man, the most marvellous man in all the world, for desperate distempers.

Valere. How! Pray where can we find him.

Martina. You'll find him this moment towards that little place there, he diverts himself with cutting of wood.

Lucas. A doctor cut wood!

Valere. He diverts himself with gathering of simples you'd say?

Martina. No. 'Tis an odd kind of a man who takes delight in it, a fantastical, fanciful, humoursome mortal, and one that you'd never take for what he is; he goes dressed in an extravagant manner, affects sometimes to appear ignorant, keeping his knowledge within him, and avoids nothing so much, as exercising the marvellous talents which Heaven has given him for medicine.

Valere. 'Tis a wonderful thing, that all your great men have still something of caprice, some small grain of folly mixed with their learning.

Martina. The folly of this man is greater than can be believed, for it sometimes goes so far that he'll bear to be beat before he'll acknowledge his capacity; and I give you notice that you'll never gain your end, that he'll never own he's a doctor, if the whim is on him, unless you each take a cudgel, and bring him by strength of blows to confess at last what at first he'll conceal from you. 'Tis thus we treat him when we have occasion for him.

Valere. Strange folly!

Martina. 'Tis true. But after that you'll see he'll do miracles.

Valere. What's his name?

Martina. His name is Sganarel; but he is easy to be known. 'Tis a man who has a large black beard, and who wears a ruff, with a yellow and green coat.

Lucas. A yellow and green coat! He's the doctor of paroquets then.

Valere. But is it very true that he is so learned, as you say?

Martina. What? Why 'tis a man that does wonders. Six months ago a woman was given over by all the other physicians. They thought her dead for six hours, and prepared to bury her, when they brought the man, we are speaking of, by force. Having seen her, he put a little drop of something into her mouth; and that very instant, she raised herself from her bed, and began immediately to walk about the room, as if nothing had been the matter.

Lucas. Hah!

Valere. This must have been some drop of drinkable gold.

Martina. That might really be. 'Tis not three weeks ago, that a young lad of twelve years old tumbled down from the top of a tower, and broke his head, arms, and legs, on the pavement. They had no sooner got our man to him, but he rubbed his body all over with a certain ointment, which he makes, and the youth immediately raised himself on his feet, and ran to play at chuck.

Lucas. Hah!

Valere. This same man must have the universal medicine.

Martina. Who doubts of it?

Lucas. Ods-bobs, this is just such a man as we want; let's go quickly and search 'en out.

Valere. We thank you for the favour you've done us.

Martina. But remember well however, the caution I have given you.

Lucas. Hey! 'Zooks, let us alone. If he wants nothing but beating, the cow's our own.

Valere. [To Lucas.] We were mighty happy in meeting with this woman; I conceive the greatest hopes from it in the world.

SCENE VI

Sganarel, Valere, Lucas.

Sganarel. [Comes on the stage, with a bottle in his hand, not seeing Valere or Lucas.] Tol de rol, lol dol dol.

Valere. I hear somebody singing and cutting of wood.

Sganarel. Tol, lol, dol—I'faith, I've worked enough to drink a sup. Let's take a little breath. [He drinks.] This same wood is as salt as the devil.

[*Sings.*] What pleasure's so great, as the bottle can give,
What music so sweet, as thy little gull, gull!

My fate might be envied by all men that live,
Were my dear jolly bottle, but constantly full.

Say why, my sweet bottle, I prithee, say why,
Since, when full so delightful, you'll ever be dry.

Come, s'death, we must not breed melancholy.

Valere. [*Low to Lucas.*] There's the very man.

Lucas. [*Low to Valere.*] I think you say true, and that I've
have found 'en out by my nose.

Valere. Let's see him nearer.

Sganarel. [*Hugging his bottle.*] Ah! my little rogue, how I
do love thee, my little corksy! [*Seeing Valere and Lucas looking
at him, he lowers his voice.*] My fate—might—be envied
—by all men that live—What the deuce, who do these
folks want?

Valere. 'Tis he, most certainly.

Lucas. [*To Valere.*] He's as like him that was defigured to
us, as if a had been spitten out of his mouth.

*[Sganarel sets down the bottle on the ground, and Valere
bowing to salute him, he thinking 'tis with a design to
take it away, puts it on the other side. Upon which
Lucas doing the same thing, he takes it up again, and
holds it close to his breast, with divers gestures, which
make great dumb show.]*

Sganarel. [*Aside.*] They consult together, and look earnestly
at me. What design can they have?

Valere. Sir, is it not you who are called Sganarel?

Sganarel. Hey! What?

Valere. I ask you, if it is not you, whose name is Sganarel?

Sganarel. [*Turning towards Valere, and then towards Lucas.*] Yes, and no, according to what you would have with him.

Valere. Nothing, but to do him all the civilities we could.

Sganarel. In that case, 'tis me whose name's Sganarel.

Valere. Sir, we are transported to see you; we have been
recommended to you for that we are searching after; and we
come to beg your assistance, which we want.

Sganarel. If 'tis anything, gentlemen, that depends upon
my little employment, I am very ready to serve you.

Valere. Sir, 'tis too great a favour that you do us: but be
covered, pray, sir, the sun may incommod you.

Lucas. Cover your skull, zir.

Sganarel. [Aside.] These people are mighty full of ceremony.
[Puts on his hat.]

Valere. Sir, you must not think strange that we come to you. Skilful people are always sought for, and we are informed of your ability.

Sganarel. 'Tis true, sirs, that I am the first man in the world for making of faggots.

Valere. Ah! sir—

Sganarel. I spare nothing in doing 'em, and make 'em after a manner that people have no reason to find fault with them.

Valere. Sir, that's not the thing in question.

Sganarel. But then I fell 'em for nine and twopence a hundred.

Valere. Pray don't let us talk of that.

Sganarel. I assure you I can't let them go for less.

Valere. Sir, we know how things are.

Sganarel. If you know how things are, you know that I sell them so.

Valere. Sir, this is jesting, but—

Sganarel. I do not jest, I can't bate anything of it.

Valere. Let us talk after another manner, pray now.

Sganarel. You may get them at another place for less, there are faggots and faggots: but for those that I make—

Valere. Pray sir, let us leave this discourse.

Sganarel. I swear to you, that you shall not have them, if you fall short a farthing of it.

Valere. Oh! fie.

Sganarel. No, o' my conscience, you shall pay that for 'em. I speak sincerely, and am not a man that would ask too much.

Valere. Should such a person as you, sir, amuse himself with these gross dissimulations, demean himself by talking in this manner; a man so learned, such a famous physician as you are, be willing to disguise himself from the eyes of the world, and keep buried the fine talents he enjoys?

Sganarel. [Aside.] The fellow's a fool.

Valere. Pray, sir, don't dissemble with us.

Sganarel. What?

Lucas. All this hodge-podge signifies nought; I do know what I do know.

Sganarel. Well then, what would you say? Who do you take me for?

Valere. For what you are, for a great doctor.

Sganarel. Doctor yourself; I am not one, nor ever was.

Valere. [Aside.] This is the folly that possesses him.

[Aloud.] Sir, don't be willing to deny things any longer; and let us not come, pray, to troublesome extremities.

Sganarel. To what?

Valere. To certain things which we should be sorry for.

Sganarel. S'death, come to what you please; I am not a doctor, and don't understand what you would be at.

Valere. [Aside.] I see plainly that we must make use of the remedy. [Aloud.] Sir, once more I desire you to own what you are.

Lucas. And s'bobs, don't latterlammas it any longer, but confess frankly that you be a doctor.

Sganarel. [Aside.] I'm mad—

Valere. Where's the good of denying what is known?

Lucas. Wherefore all these whimsies? What service will this do you.

Sganarel. Gentlemen in one word, as well as in two thousand, I tell you that I am not a doctor.

Valere. You are not a doctor?

Sganarel. No.

Lucas. Y'an't a doctor?

Sganarel. No, I tell you.

Valere. Since you will have it, we must betake ourselves to it then. [They take each of them a cudgel and thrash him.

Sganarel. Hold, hold, hold, gentlemen, I'm what you please.

Valere. Why, sir, did you oblige us to this violence?

Lucas. To what good did you make us be at the pain to beat you?

Valere. I assure you, that I did it with all the regret in the world.

Lucas. By my foith and vronkly, I did it with zorrow.

Sganarel. What the deuce d'e mean, sirs? Pray, is it out of a joke, or are you both distracted, that you will have me to be a doctor?

Valere. What won't you yield yet, and do you deny that you are a physician?

Sganarel. The devil take me if I am one.

Lucas. En't it true, that you do understand physic.

Sganarel. No, plague choke me if I do. [They begin to beat him again.] Hold hold; well gentlemen, yes, since you will have it so, I am a doctor, I am a doctor; an apothecary too, if you think good. I rather choose to agree to everything than suffer myself to be knocked o' the head.

Valere. Ay, now things go well, sir; I'm transported to see you're become reasonable.

Lucas. You give me a heart full of joy to zee you talk in this monner.

Valere. I ask your pardon with all my soul.

Lucas. I'se demand excuse for the liberty Ic' have ta'en.

Sganarel. [Aside.] Whu, have I really deceived myself then, and am I become a doctor without knowing it?

Valere. You shall not repent, sir, discovering to us what you are; and you'll certainly see that you'll be satisfied for it.

Sganarel. But, gentlemen, tell me, don't you deceive yourselves? Is it very sure that I am a doctor?

Lucas. Yes, by my foith.

Sganarel. In good earnest?

Valere. Undoubtedly.

Sganarel. The devil take me if I knew it.

Valere. How! You are the most able physician in the world.

Sganarel. Ay! Ay!

Lucas. A doctor, that has healed I know not how many ailments.

Sganarel. O dear!

Valere. A woman was taken for dead six hours, she was just ready to be buried, when with one drop of a certain thing you brought her to life again, and made her walk immediately about the room.

Sganarel. The plague I did!

Lucas. A little lad of a dozen-year old, fell from the top of a steeple, whereupon a had his head, lags, and arms broaken; and you, with I know not what ointment, made 'en soon scramble up on his feet, and scour away to play at chuck.

Sganarel. The devil!

Valere. In short, sir, you shall have satisfaction with us; and you may gain whatever you will, if you'll but suffer us to conduct you to where we want you.

Sganarel. I may gain what I will?

Valere. Yes.

Sganarel. Oh! I'm a doctor without dispute. I had forgotten it, but I remember it now. What's the affair? Where must I transport myself to?

Valere. We'll conduct you. The affair is to go see a young lady who has lost her speech.

Sganarel. Faith I have not found it.

Valere. [To Lucas.] He loves to joke. [To Sganarel.] Come, sir.

Sganarel. Without a doctor's gown?

Valere. We'll procure you one.

Sganarel. [Offering his bottle to *Valere*.] Do you hold that. That's where I put my julep. [Then turns towards *Lucas* and spits.] Walk you over that by prescription of the doctor.

Lucas. By the mass this is a doctor that pleases me; I believe that he'll succeed, he's such a merry fellow.

ACT II

SCENE I

Géronte, Valere, Lucas, Jacqueline.

Valere. Yes, sir, I believe you will be satisfied; for we have brought you the greatest physician in the world.

Lucas. Adzsooks, none can be better; all the others be not worthy to clean his shoes for'n.

Valere. 'Tis one who has done marvellous cures.

Lucas. Who has healed folk that were dead.

Valere. He's a little whimsical as I told you; and i'faith there are times when his senses give him the slip, and he does not appear to be what he is.

Lucas. Yes, a loves to play the wag, and foith they do say, no offence, that a have had a small knock o' the crown with an axe.

Valere. But he's all skill at the bottom; and he often says things extremely sublime.

Lucas. When a gives his mind to't, a talks as vine exactly as tho'f a read in a book.

Valere. His reputation is already spread round here; and all the world come to him.

Géronte. I've a vast desire to see him; bring him to me immediately.

Valere. I'll go look for him

SCENE II

Géronte, Jacqueline, Lucas.

Jacqueline. By my trath, zir, this will do just what the others ha' done. I'se believe that he'll be so good so bad; and the best physician you can gee your daughter, according to

my notion, is a good hondsome husband for whom she has a kindness.

Géronite. Good lack, my sweet nurse, you meddle with many things.

Lucas. Hold your peace, our huswife Jacqueline; it don't belong to you to thrust in your nose there.

Jacqueline. I tell you, and both o' ye, that all these physicians will do her no more good than a glass of fair water; that your daughter has need o' somewhat else than rhubarb and zenna; and that a husband's a plaster which cures all the ailments of young women.

Géronite. Is she in a condition now, that any one would burthen himself with her with the infirmity she has? And when I had a design of marrying her, did she not oppose my intentions?

Jacqueline. I believe so truly, you would a' given her a mon she doan't like. Wherefore did not you not offer her this same Mr. Liander, who has gotten her heart? She'd been mighty obedient, and I'll wager that he'll take her as she is, if yow'd but give her to him.

Géronite. This Leander is not the man she must have; he has not the wealth which the other has.

Jacqueline. He has an nuncle that's mortal rich, whose heritage a is to be.

Géronite. All these riches to come, appear to me as mere songs. There's nothing like what people are in possession of; and we run a great risk of being cozened when we reckon up riches which are kept for us by others. Death has not always open ears to the wishes and prayers of your gentlemen inheritors, and they have time to be sharp set, who wait for somebody's decease before they can eat.

Jacqueline. In short, I've often heard say, that in marriage, as in other affairs, contentment is beyond riches. Vathers and mothers ha' the cursed custom of asking alway, what han he, and what han she? And Gaffer Piarre has married his girl Simounetta to fat Tummas, because a had a scrap of a vineyard more than young Robin, where she had placed her liking; and there the poor creature is gone as yallow as a quince, and has gotten nothing all the whoile. This is a foin example for you, zir; folk have nothing but their pleasure in this world; and I should rather choose to gee my girl a good husband, that was agreeable to her, than all the incomes o' the country.

Géronite. Plague! Mrs. Nurse, how you prate! hold your

peace pray; you take too much trouble on you, and will overheat your milk.

Lucas. [Striking Géronte on the shoulders at the end of every sentence.] S'bobs, hold your tongue, you are an imparzinont huswife. Maister ha' nothing to do with thy preachments; he knows what a mun do. Mind to gee your child the breast, without being so much upon the reasonous. Maister is his daughter's vather, and he's a good mon, and a woise one, and knows what to do in the case.

Géronte. Oh! Softly, softly.

Lucas. [Striking Géronte on the shoulders again.] Sir, I'll mortify her a bit, and learn her the respect she awes you.

Géronte. Yes, but these actions are not necessary.

SCENE III

Valere, Sganarel, Géronte, Lucas, Jacqueline.

Valere. Sir, prepare yourself, this is your doctor, that's coming in.

Géronte. [To Sganarel.] Sir, I'm transported to see you at my house, for we have great occasion for you.

Sganarel. [In a physician's gown, with a high crowned hat.] Hippocrates says,—let's both be covered.

Géronte. Does Hippocrates say so?

Sganarel. Yes.

Géronte. In what chapter pray?

Sganarel. In his chapter—upon hats.

Géronte. Since Hippocrates says so, it must be done.

Sganarel. Mr. Doctor, having heard of the wonderful things—

Géronte. Who do you speak to, pray?

Sganarel. To you.

Géronte. I am not a doctor. —

Sganarel. You are not a doctor?

Géronte. No indeed.

Sganarel. Seriously?

Géronte. Seriously. [Sganarel takes a cudgel and beats Géronte.] Oh! oh! oh!

Sganarel. Now you are a doctor then, I had never any other licence.

Géronte. [To Valere.] What devil of a fellow have you brought me here?

Valere. I told you justly that 'twas a droll doctor.

Géronte. Yes, but I shall send him a-going with his drollery.

Lucas. Don't mind this, maister, 'tis only for a joke.

Géronte. This kind of joking does not please me.

Sganarel. Sir, I ask pardon for the liberty I've taken.

Géronte. Sir, your servant.

Sganarel. I'm sorry—

Géronte. 'Tis nothing at all.

Sganarel. For the strokes of the cudgel—

Géronte. There's no harm.

Sganarel. Which I've had the honour to give you.

Géronte. Let us talk no more of that. I have a daughter, sir, who is fallen into a strange disease.

Sganarel. I'm rejoiced, sir, that your daughter has need of me; and I wish with all my heart that you had the same occasion likewise, you and all your family, that I might manifest the desire I have of serving you.

Géronte. I'm obliged to you for your good wishes.

Sganarel. I assure you 'tis from the bottom of my soul that I speak it.

Géronte. 'Tis too great an honour you do me—

Sganarel. What is your daughter's name?

Géronte. Lucinda.

Sganarel. Lucinda! O! a charming name to act the doctor on! Lucinda!

Géronte. I'll go and see a little what she's doing.

Sganarel. Who is that jolly dame there?

Géronte. She's nurse to a young child of mine.

SCENE IV

Sganarel, Jacqueline, Lucas.

Sganarel. [Aside.] S'lfe! What a lovely piece of stuff it is! Nurse! Charming nurse, my doctorship is the very humble slave of your nurseship, and I heartily wish I were the happy bantling that sucks the milk of your good graces. [Putting his hand on her bosom.] All my medicines, all my skill, all my capacity is at your service, and—

Lucas. With your leave, Mr. Doctor, pray now let alone my wife.

Sganarel. What, is she your wife?

Lucas. Yes.

Sganarel. Hah! I did not know it truly, but am rejoiced at it out of love to you both. [Making as if he would embrace Lucas, embraces the nurse.]

Lucas. [Drawing Sganarel away, and stepping between him and his wife.] Softly, an you please.

Sganarel. I do assure you that I'm overjoyed at your being joined together. I congratulate her on having such a husband as you; and I congratulate you on having so handsome a wife, one so discreet and so well made as she is. [He makes again as if he would embrace Lucas, and slipping under his arm, embraces the nurse.]

Lucas. [Drawing him away again.] S'bobs, not so many complamants, I beseech ye!

Sganarel. Would not you have me rejoice with you for so lovely a conjunction?

Lucas. With me as much an you please; but forbear sarimony with my wife.

Sganarel. I take an equal part in both your good fortunes; and if I embrace you to witness my joy to you, I embrace her to witness the same to her. [Continuing the same action.]

Lucas. [Drawing him away the third time.] S'bodakins, Mr. Doctor, what vagaries are here!

SCENE V

Géronte, Sganarel, Lucas, Jacqueline.

Géronte. Sir, they'll bring my daughter to you immediately.

Sganarel. I attend her, sir, with all the power of medicine.

Géronte. Where is it?

Sganarel. [Touching his forehead.] Within here.

Géronte. Mighty well.

Sganarel. But as I am concerned for all your family, I must make a trial of your nurse's milk a little, and visit her breast.

Lucas. [Drawing him away, and whisking him round.] Nayh, nayh, I doan't want that to be done.

Sganarel. 'Tis the office of a doctor to inspect into the nipples of nurses.

Lucas. Be't your office how 'twill, I'm your zarvant for that.

Sganarel. Hast thou really the impudence to contradict a physician? Out there.

Lucas. I'se laugh at that.

Sganarel. [Looking askew at him.] I'll give thee a fever.

Jacqueline. [Taking Lucas by the arm, and whisking him round.] Get thee gone hence; am not I big enough to defend myself, if he does anything to me that he should not do?

Lucas. I won't have him meddle with thee.

Sganarel. Fie on the rascal, he's jealous of his wife.

Géronte. Here's my daughter.

SCENE VI

Lucinda, Géronte, Sganarel, Valere, Lucas, Jacqueline.

Sganarel. Is this the sick person?

Géronte. Yes, I've no daughter but she, and I should be in the utmost grief were she to die.

Sganarel. Let her take great care of that; she must not die without the doctor's order.

Géronte. A chair, here.

Sganarel. [Sits between Géronte and Lucinda] This is a patient who is not so very distasteful, and I hold that a man in good health might make a shift well enough with her.

Géronte. You have made her laugh, sir.

Sganarel. So much the better, when the doctor makes the patient laugh, 'tis the best symptom in the world. [To *Lucinda*.] Well, what's the case? what ails you? what's the disorder you feel?

Lucinda. [Putting her hand to her mouth, head, and under her chin.] Han, hi, hon, han.

Sganarel. Hey! what d'e say?

Lucinda. [Continuing the same motions.] Han, hi, hon, han, han, hi, hon.

Sganarel. What?

Lucinda. Han, hi, hon.

Sganarel. Han, hi, hon, han, ha. I don't understand you. What the deuce of a language is this?

Géronte. That's her distemper, sir. She's become dumb, and we have not yet been able to find out the cause of it; which accident has occasioned her marriage to be retarded.

Sganarel. Why so?

Géronte. He whom she was to marry, would wait till she was cured, before he'd bring things to a conclusion.

Sganarel. And who is this sot, who would not have his wife dumb? Would to Heaven that mine had the same disease! I should take sufficient care not to have her cured.

Géronte. In short, sir, we must entreat you to employ your utmost application to alleviate her illness.

Sganarel. O! don't put yourself in pain about it. But tell me a little; does this illness oppress her very much?

Géronte. Yes, sir.

Sganarel. So much the better. Does she feel any great pains?

Géronte. Very great.

Sganarel. That's mighty well. Does she go you know where?

Géronte. Yes.

Sganarel. Plentifully?

Géronte. I know nothing of that.

Sganarel. Is the discharge laudable?

Géronte. I'm not skilled in those things.

Sganarel. [To *Lucinda.*] Give me your arm. [To *Géronte.*] Here's a pulse which denotes that your daughter is dumb.

Géronte. Why truly, sir, that's her disease, you have found it out all at the first touch.

Sganarel. Ay, ay!

Jacqueline. Do but zee how a has divoined her ailment.

Sganarel. We great doctors know things instantly. An ignorant fellow would have been puzzled, and would have told you 'tis this, and 'tis that; but for my part, I hit the nail on the head, the very first stroke, and acquaint you that your daughter is dumb.

Géronte. Yes; but I should be glad that you could tell from whence that came.

Sganarel. There's nothing more easy. It came from hence, that she has lost her speech.

Géronte. Very good; but the cause, pray, which made her lose her speech?

Sganarel. All our best authors will inform you that 'tis an impediment in the action of her tongue.

Géronte. But your sentiments moreover, upon this impediment in the action of the tongue.

Sganarel. Aristotle says upon it—mighty fine things.

Géronte. I believe it.

Sganarel. Ah! that same was a great man.

Géronte. No doubt.

Sganarel. A mighty great man: a man that was greater [Holding out his arm from his elbow.] than me by all this. But to return to our reasoning. I hold, that this impediment in the action of her tongue is caused by certain humours, which

amongst us scholars are called peccant humours; peccant, that's to say—peccant humours; so that the vapours formed by the exhalations of influences which rise in the region of diseases, coming—as we may say—to—Do you understand Latin?

Géronte. Not in the least.

Sganarel. [Getting up hastily.] You don't understand Latin!

Géronte. No.

Sganarel. [Making divers diverting postures.] *Cabritias arcithuram, catalamus, singulariter, nominativo, hæc musa, the muse, Bonus, bona, bonum, Deus sanctus, est ne oratio Latinas? etiam, yes. Quare, whercfore? quia substantivo, and adjectivum, concordat in generi, numerum, and casus.*

Géronte. Ah! wherefore did not I study!

Jacqueline. What a learned man is this!

Lucas. Yes, this is so vine, that I doan't understand a sillable of't.

Sganarel. For these vapours that I speak to you of, passing from the left side, where the liver is, to the right side, where the heart is, finds that the lungs, which we call in Latin, *Armyan*, having communication with the brain, which in Greek we name, *Nasmus*, by means of the hollow vein, which in Hebrew we call, *Cubile*, meets in its way the said vapours, which fill the ventricles of the omoplate: and because the said vapours—comprehend this reasoning well, I pray you; and because the said vapours have a certain malignity—attend well to this, I conjure you.

Géronte. Yes.

Sganarel. Have a certain malignity which is caused—be attentive, if you please.

Géronte. I am so.

Sganarel. Which is caused by the acrimony of the humours engendered in the concavity of the diaphragm, it comes to pass, that these vapours—*Ossabandus, nequeis, nequer, potarium, quipsa milus*. That's exactly the cause of your daughter's being dumb.

Jacqueline. Ah! that's foinly zaid, our mon!

Lucas. Why ha' not I a tongue so well hanged?

Géronte. Nobody could reason better undoubtedly. There's but one thing in it which stuck in my stomach; and that's the place of the liver and heart. I apprehend that you place them otherwise than they are: that the heart is on the left side, and the liver on the right side.

Sganarel. Yes, it was formerly so; but we have altered all that, and we now practise medicine after quite a new method.

Géronte. That's what I did not know, and I ask your pardon for my ignorance.

Sganarel. There's no harm? you are not obliged to be as learned as us.

Géronte. True: but sir, what think you must be done with this disease?

Sganarel. What do I think must be done?

Géronte. Yes.

Sganarel. My advice is, that they put her to bed; and that they make her take for a remedy, a quantity of bread soaked in wine.

Géronte. Wherefore that, sir?

Sganarel. Because, that in bread and wine mixed together, there's a sympathetic virtue, which occasions talking. Don't you plainly see, that they give no other thing to parrots, and that by eating this they learn to talk?

Géronte. That's true. Oh! the great man! Quickly, a quantity of bread and wine.

Sganarel. I'll return in the evening, to see what condition she'll be in.

SCENE VII

Géronte, Sganarel, Jacqueline.

Sganarel. [To Jacqueline.] Softly, you. [To Géronte.] Sir, here's a nurse, for whom I must make up some few remedies.

Jacqueline. Who, I? I ha' the best health in the world.

Sganarel. So much the worse, nurse, so much the worse. This high health is to be feared; and it won't be amiss to give you a little gentle bleeding, and administer a little dulcifying clyster.

Géronte. But, sir, this is a method which I don't comprehend. Why let her blood, when she has no illness?

Sganarel. No matter, the method is salutary; and as one drinks for thirst to come, one must likewise bleed for illness to come.

Jacqueline. [Going.] Trath, I laugh at that; I'll not make a poticary's shop o' my carcass.

Sganarel. You are averse to physic; but we can make you subject to reason.

SCENE VIII

*Géronte, Sganarel.**Sganarel.* I give you good-morrow, sir.*Géronte.* Stay a little, if you please.*Sganarel.* What would you do?*Géronte.* Give you a fee, sir.*Sganarel.* [Reaching out his hand behind him, while *Géronte* opens his purse.] I won't take it, sir.*Géronte.* Sir.*Sganarel.* No.*Géronte.* Stay one moment.*Sganarel.* By no means.*Géronte.* Pray now.*Sganarel.* You mistake.*Géronte.* 'Tis done presently.*Sganarel.* I won't do it.*Géronte.* Hey!*Sganarel.* 'Tis not money that induces me to practise.*Géronte.* I believe it.*Sganarel.* [After having taken the money.] Is this weight?*Géronte.* Yes, sir.*Sganarel.* I am not a mercenary physician.*Géronte.* I know it well.*Sganarel.* Interest does not govern me.*Géronte.* I have not that thought.*Sganarel.* [Alone, looking on the money he had received.] I' faith this does not go ill, and provided that—

SCENE IX

*Leander, Sganarel.**Leander.* Sir, I have waited for you a long time, and am come to implore your assistance.*Sganarel.* [Feeling his pulse.] A very bad pulse this.*Leander.* I am not sick, sir; nor is it for that I come to you.*Sganarel.* If you are not sick, why the deuce did you not say so?*Leander.* No. To inform you of the affair in two words, my name is Leander, and I'm in love with Lucinda, whom you come to visit. But as all manner of access to her is blocked up from me by the ill temper of her father, I run the hazard of

entreating you to endeavour to serve me in my amour, and to give me an opportunity of executing a stratagem I've invented, to be able to speak a word or two with her, on which my life and happiness absolutely depend.

Sganarel. Who d'ye take me for? What? Dare you apply to me to serve you in your amour, and to debase the dignity of a physician by employments of this kind?

Leander. Don't make a noise, sir!

Sganarel. [Making him retreat.] I will do it; you are an impudent fellow.

Leander. Oh! sir, softly.

Sganarel. An inconsiderate jackanapes.

Leander. Pray now.

Sganarel. I'll teach you that I'm not such a man, and that 'tis an extreme piece of insolence—

Leander. [Taking out a purse.] Sir.

Sganarel. [Taking the purse.] To think of employing me—. I don't speak as to you, for you are an honest man, and I should rejoice to do you service. But there are certain impudent creatures in the world, who take people for what they are not; and this, I must own to you, puts me in a passion.

Leander. I ask your pardon, sir, for the liberty that—

Sganarel. You jest. What's the business?

Leander. Know then, sir, that this disease which you would cure, is a feigned disease. The doctors have reasoned upon it as they should do, and have not failed to say that it proceeds, one from the brain, one from the intestines, one from the spleen, one from the liver; but 'tis certain that love's the true cause of it, and that Lucinda counterfeited this disease only to deliver herself from a match which she had been importuned to. But for fear they should see us together, let us retire from hence, and I'll tell you as we go, what I wish from you.

Sganarel. Come, sir, you have given me an inconceivable sensibility for your love; and I'll spend all my physic in the affair, but the patient shall kick up, or else be yours.

ACT III

SCENE I

Leander, Sganarel.

Leander. Methinks I am not amiss thus for an apothecary, and as the father has scarce ever seen me, this change of dress and periuke is sufficient, I believe, to disguise me.

Sganarel. Undoubtedly.

Leander. All I could wish, would be to know five or six strong physical terms, to adorn my discourse, and give me the air of a learned man.

Sganarel. Come come, all that's not necessary; the habit sufficeth; I know no more of the matter than you.

Leander. What!

Sganarel. The deuce take me, if I understand anything of physic. You are a gentleman, and I'll repose a confidence in you, as you have in me.

Leander. What, you are not actually——

Sganarel. No, I tell you, they made me a doctor in spite of my teeth. I never attempted to be so learned as that; my studies lasted only till I was six years old. I know not by what means this notion is come to 'em: but when I found that they would make me a doctor by violence, I resolved to be one at the expense of those I might have to do with. Nevertheless, you can't imagine how the error is spread about, and in what manner every one's possessed to believe me a skilful man. They come to seek me from all parts; and if things go on always the same, I intend to keep to physic all my lifetime. I find 'tis the best trade of all; for be it that we do good, or be it that we do ill, we are always paid after the same rate. The bad work never falls upon our back, and we cut out as we please the stuff we work on. A shoemaker can't spoil a scrap of leather in making a pair of shoes, but he's obliged to pay sauce for it, when here we may spoil a man without costing one anything. The blunders are not ours; the fault's always in him that dies. In short, the good of this profession is, that amongst the dead there is an honesty, a discretion the greatest in the world; you never find 'em complain of the physician that killed 'em.

Leander. 'Tis true, the dead are very honest people in this respect.

Sganarel. [Observing men coming to him.] Here are people who look as if they came to consult me. [To Leander.] Go and wait for me near your mistress's house.

SCENE II

Thibaut, Perrin, Sganarel.

Thibaut. Zir, we come to search for ye, zon Perrin and I.

Sganarel. What's the matter?

Thibaut. His poor mother, whose naime is Parette, has been this xix months in a zick bed.

Sganarel. [Holding out his hand as to receive money.] What would you have me do to her?

Thibaut. I'se would ha' ye, zir, gi' us some little druggery ware to heal her withal.

Sganarel. I must see what she's sick of.

Thibaut. She's zick of an hypocrisy, zir.

Sganarel. Of an hypocrisy?

Thibaut. Ay, that's to zay, she's bloated up all over, and folk do zay that 'tis a deal of zeriosities that she have in her body, and that her liver, her belly, or her spleen as you would call it, in plaise of making blood make nothing but water. She ha' one day out of two, the quotiguian fever, with lassitudes and pains in the muscles of her legs. One hears fleaims in her throat that are e'en ready to choke her. Zometimes she's ta'en with sincops and conversions, that we do think, she's gone off. We have in our parish, a poticary, with reverence be it spoken, who has given her I know not how much historicks, and 'tave cost me moare than a dozen of good crawns in clysters may't please you, in apostumes which they made her take, in hyacinth infactions, and cordial portions. But all this, as they say, was noathing but a nointment of fiddle-faddle. He'd a' gi'n her some of a certain drug, which they call Ametile Wine; but I'se was under downright fear, that 'twould send her to her forefathers, for they zay, that these great doctors kill I know not how many people with that zame invantion.

Sganarel. [Holding his hand out all the while.] Let's come to the point, friend, let's come to the point.

Thibaut. The point is, zir, that we are come to bag o' ye, to tell us what we mun do.

Sganarel. I don't understand you in the least.

Perrin. My mother is zick, zir, and here be two crawns which we ha' brought ye to gee us some cure.

Sganarel. Oh! I understand you. There's a lad that speaks clearly, and explains himself as he should do. You say that your mother is sick of a dropsy, that she's swelled all over the body, that she has a fever, with pains in her legs, and that she's taken by turns, with sincopes and convulsions, that's to say, with fainting fits.

Perrin. Ay, yes, zir, that's exactly the matter.

Sganarel. I comprehended at once, what you said. You have a father who does not know what he says. Now then you'd have a remedy from me?

Perrin. Ay, zir.

Sganarel. A remedy to cure her?

Perrin. That's what I mean.

Sganarel. Take this, there's a piece of cheese, which you must make her take.

Perrin. Cheese, zir.

Sganarel. Yes, 'tis prepared cheese, in which there is mixed gold, coral, pearls, and abundance of other costly things.

Perrin. Zir, we're mainly obliged t'ye, and we'll go make her take it this very instont.

Sganarel. Go. If she dies, don't fail to have her buried as handsomely as you can.

SCENE III

Jacqueline, Sganarel, Lucas, at the farther end of the stage.

Sganarel. Here's the jolly nurse. Ah! nurse of my heart, I'm transported with this meeting; the sight of you is rhubarb, cassia, and senna, which purge away all melancholy from my mind.

Jacqueline. By my troth, Mr. Doctor, that's too foinly said for me, I se doan't understand your Lattan at all.

Sganarel. Get sick, I beseech you, nurse, get sick for my sake. I should take all the pleasure in the world to cure you.

Jacqueline. Your zarvant, zir, I'd much rather choose not to be cured.

Sganarel. I pity you, fair nurse, in having such a jealous troublesome husband as he you have.

Jacqueline. What would ye ha' me do, zir, 'tis a penitence for my offences, and where the goat's tied, there she must browse.

Sganarel. What? such a rustic as that? A fellow that watches you continually, and won't let anybody speak to you?

Jacqueline. Alack, you've not zeen anything of'n yet; this is nothing but a small zample of his ill-nature.

Sganarel. Is it possible, and can a fellow have so mean a spirit, as to use such a person as you are, ill? Ah! there are some, sweet nurse, that I know, and who are not far from hence, that would think themselves happy but to kiss the little tops of your toes! Why should one so well made, fall into such hands? A mere animal, a brute, a fool, a sot—Forgive me, nurse, for speaking in this manner of your husband.

Jacqueline. Ah! sir, I'se know well enow that a deserves all those naimes.

Sganarel. Ay, undoubtedly, nurse, he does deserve 'em, and he deserves further that you should plant something on his head, to punish him for the suspicions he has.

Jacqueline. 'Tis very true, that if I'se had nothing in sight but his interest, it might drive me to do some strange thing.

Sganarel. I faith you'd not do ill to be revenged on him with someone. 'Tis a fellow, I tell you, who richly deserves it, and if I were fortunate enough, fair nurse, to be pitched on for—
[Whilst *Sganarel reaches out his arm to embrace Jacqueline, Lucas thrusts his head under his arm, and steps between them ; Sganarel and Jacqueline look at Lucas, and go off on different sides.*]

SCENE IV

Géronte, Lucas.

Géronte. Ho, Lucas, hast thou not seen our doctor here?

Lucas. Yes, the deuce had 'en, I'se ha' zeen him, and my wife too.

Géronte. Where is't that he can be then?

Lucas. I don't know; but I wish he were at the devil.

Géronte Go and see a little how my daughter does.

SCENE V

Sganarel, Leander, Géronte.

Géronte. Oh, sir, I have been asking where you were.

Sganarel. I was amusing myself in your court, to carry off the superfluity of the liquor. How does the patient do?

Géronte. A little worse since your remedy.

Sganarel. So much the better. 'Tis a sign it operates.

Géronte. Yes; but I fear lest it choke her in operating.

Sganarel. Don't be in pain about that; I have medicines

which despise all distempers, and I should be glad to see her at death's door.

Géronte. Who is this man you bring here?

Sganarel. [Making signs with his hand, that it is an apothecary.] "Tis—

Géronte. What?

Sganarel. He—

Géronte. Hey!

Sganarel. Who—

Géronte. I understand you.

Sganarel. Your daughter will have occasion for him.

SCENE VI

Lucinda, Géronte, Leander, Jacqueline, Sganarel.

Jacqueline. Here, zir, is your daughter, she desires to walk a little.

Sganarel. That will do her good. [To *Leander*.] Go to her, Mr. Apothecary, feel her pulse a little, that I may consult with you by and by about her distemper. [Here he takes *Géronte* to one end of the stage, and putting one arm over his shoulder, puts his hand under his chin, to prevent him from turning his head towards *Leander* and *Lucinda*.] Sir, 'tis a great and subtle question amongst the doctors, whether women are more easy to cure than men. Pray hearken to this if you please. Some say No, others say Yes; and for my part, I say both Yes and No, forasmuch as the incongruity of the opaque humours which meet in the natural modification of women, being the cause that the brutal part will always bear rule over the sensitive, we see that the inequality of their opinions depends on the oblique motion of the circle of the moon, and as the sun which darts its rays on the concavity of the earth, finds—

Lucinda. [To *Leander*.] No, I'm not capable of changing my sentiments.

Géronte. My daughter speaks! O the great power of medicine! O wonderful physician! How much am I obliged to you, sir, for this marvellous cure! and what can I do for you, after such a piece of service?

Sganarel. [Walking about the stage, and fanning himself with his hat.] This distemper has put me to a vast deal of pains.

Lucinda. Yes, father, I have recovered my speech; but I've recovered it to tell you that I will never have any other

husband than Leander, and that 'tis in vain you intend to give me Horatio.

Géronte. But—

Lucinda. Nothing is capable of shaking the resolution I have taken.

Géronte. What!

Lucinda. You'll oppose me in vain with fine arguments.

Géronte. If—

Lucinda. All your talk will signify nothing.

Géronte. I—

Lucinda. 'Tis a thing I'm determined on

Géronte. But—

Lucinda. 'Tis not paternal power that shall oblige me to marry whether I will or not.

Géronte. I have—

Lucinda. You have liberty to make all your efforts.

Géronte. It—

Lucinda. My heart cannot submit to this tyranny.

Géronte. There—

Lucinda. And I'll rather cast myself into a convent than marry a man I don't like.

Géronte. But—

Lucinda. No. By no means. Not at all. You lose your time. I will not do it. That's resolved.

Géronte. Oh! what an impetuosity of speech! There's no way of resisting it. [To *Sganarel.*] Sir, I desire you'll make her dumb again.

Sganarel. 'Tis a thing which is impossible to me. All I can do to serve you, is to make you deaf, if you will.

Géronte. I thank you. [To *Lucinda.*] Think then—

Lucinda. No, all your reasons will gain nothing on my mind.

Géronte. Thou shalt marry Horatio this night.

Lucinda. I'll rather marry death.

Sganarel. [To *Géronte.*] Good now, hold a little, let me prescribe in this affair. 'Tis a disease that affects her, and I know what remedy must be applied to it.

Géronte. Is it possible, sir, that you can likewise cure this sickness of the mind?

Sganarel. Yes, let me alone. I have remedies for everything; and our apothecary will assist us in this cure. [To *Leander.*] One word. You see that the affection she has for this Leander, is altogether contrary to her father's will, that there's no time to lose, that the humours are very acrimonious, and that 'tis

necessary to find out speedily a remedy for this illness, which may get a head by delay; for my part I can see but only one for it, which is a dose of run-away purgative mixed as it should be with two drachms of matrimonium in pills. Perhaps she'll make some difficulty of taking this medicine, but as you are an able man in your business, it belongs to you to bring her to it, and to make her swallow the thing as well as you can. Go and make her take a little turn in the garden, in order to prepare the humours, whilst I hold her father here in discourse; but above all lose no time. To the remedy, quick, to the specific remedy.

SCENE VII

Géronte, Sganarel.

Géronte. What drugs, sir, are those you were speaking of? I think that I never heard 'em named before.

Sganarel. They are drugs which people make use of upon urgent occasions.

Géronte. Did you ever see an insolence like to hers?

Sganarel. Girls are sometimes a little headstrong.

Géronte. You can't think how she dotes upon this Leander.

Sganarel. The heat of the blood occasions this in young minds.

Géronte. For my part, ever since I discovered the violence of this love I have always kept my girl shut up.

Sganarel. You have done wisely.

Géronte. And I effectually prevented their having any communication together.

Sganarel. Mighty well.

Géronte. Some folly would have come on't, had I suffered them to see one another.

Sganarel. Undoubtedly.

Géronte. And I believe the girl would have run away with him.

Sganarel. 'Tis well reasoned.

Géronte. They tell me that he does his utmost endeavours to come to the speech of her.

Sganarel. Ridiculous creature!

Géronte. But he'll lose his time.

Sganarel. Ay, ay.

Géronte. For I'll effectually prevent him from seeing of her.

Sganarel. He has not to do with a fool; you know tricks

that he knows nothing of. He's no blockhead who is sharper than you.

SCENE VIII

Lucas, Géronte, Sganarel.

Lucas. Ad's bobs, zir, here's a vine hurly-burly business; your daughter's fled away with her Liandar. 'Twas he that was the poticary; and there's Mr. Doctor that ha' made this vine operation.

Géronte. What, murder me in this manner? Here, a commissary, and hinder him from going off. Ah, villain, I'll make thee suffer the law.

Lucas. Ah! I'foith, Mr. Doctor, you shall be hanged; only budge not from hence.

SCENE IX

Martina, Sganarel, Lucas.

Martina. [To *Lucas.*] Ad's my life, what plague have I had to find out this house! Tell me some news a little of the doctor I gave you.

Lucas. There a is, just going to be hanged.

Martina. What, my husband hanged? Alas! what has he done to come to that?

Lucas. He ha' made our maister's daughter to be carried off.

Martina. Alas! my dear husband, is it really true that they are going to hang thee?

Sganarel. Thou seest. Ah!

Martina. Must thou die in the presence of so many people?

Sganarel. What wouldst thou have me do in it?

Martina. Yet if thou hadst but made an end of cutting our wood, I could have taken some comfort.

Sganarel. Be gone from hence; you break my heart.

Martina. No; I'll stay to encourage thee to die; I'll not leave thee till I have seen thee hanged.

Sganarel. Oh!

SCENE X

Géronte, Sganarel, Martina.

Géronte. [To *Sganarel.*] The commissary will come presently, and they'll put you in a place, where they shall be answerable to me for you.

Sganarel. [Kneeling.] Alas! can't this be changed into a few strokes of a cudgel?

Géronte. No, no, justice shall order it. But what do I see?

SCENE XI

Géronte, Leander, Lucinda, Sganarel, Lucas, Jacqueline.

Leander. Sir, I'm come to make Leander appear before you, and to put Lucinda again in your power. We had both of us a design to go off together, and be married; but this enterprise has given place to a more honourable proceeding. I don't design to rob you of your daughter, and 'tis from your hand alone that I'll receive her. What I would say to you, sir, is, that I have just now received letters, by which I learn that my uncle is dead, and that I am heir to all his effects.

Géronte. Sir, your virtue is to me of sufficient value, and I give you my daughter with the greatest pleasure in the world.

Sganarel. [Aside.] There physic has got a notable 'scape!

Martina. Since you'll not be hanged, thank me for your being a doctor; for 'twas I that procured thee that honour.

Sganarel. Yes, 'twas you that procured me I know not how many thwacks of a cudgel.

Leander. [To *Sganarel.*] The effect is too good to resent that.

Sganarel. Be it so. [To *Martina.*] I forgive thee those blows, in favour of the dignity thou hast raised me to: but prepare thyself from henceforth, to live in great respect with a man of my consequence, and consider that the wrath of a physician is more to be feared than can be imagined.

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